THE BOOK OF CHRISTMAS



INTRODUCTION BY HAMILTON W. MABIE
DRAWINGS BY GEORGE WHARTON EDWARDS

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THE BOOK OF CHRISTMAS



THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
NEW YORK · BOSTON · CHICAGO
ATLANTA · SAN FRANCISCO

MACMILLAN & CO., LIMITED
LONDON · BOMBAY · CALCUTTA
MELBOURNE

THE MACMILLAN CO. OF CANADA, LTD.
TORONTO

From
Annie Bernheim Cohn
Xmas 1910



THE HOLY NIGHT. *Correggio.*


The BOOK of Christ-MAS
With an Introduction by Hamilton W Mabie
and an Accompaniment of Drawings by George Wharton EDWARDS
New York The Macmillan Company 1909

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Set up and electrotyped. Published October, 1909. Reprinted December, 1909.

Norwood Press
J. S. Cushing Co. — Berwick & Smith Co.
Norwood, Mass., U.S.A.

INTRODUCTION

CAROLS are still sung in almost numberless churches, lights glow on altars bound and wreathed with spruce and holly, trees are set up in innumerable homes, and mobs of merry children sing and dance around them, stockings take on grotesque shapes and hang gaping with treasures for early marauders on Christmas morning, and hosts of men and women keep the day in their hearts in all peace and piety.

The festival, dear to the heart of sixty generations, has survived the commercial uses which it has been compelled to serve; the weariness of buying and selling in the vast bazaar of nations, stocked with all manner of things which stimulate the offerings of friendship; the widespread sense of irony which success without happiness breeds; the indifference of feeling and satiety of emotion fostered by great prosperity without that grace of culture which subdues wealth to the finer uses of life. It has survived the cynical spirit that distrusts sentiment and sneers at emotion as weaknesses which have no place in a scientific age and among men and women who know life. It has survived that preoccupation with affairs which leaves little time for feelings, and that resolute determination to make men good which leaves scant room for efforts to make them happy.

But even in this age of hard-headed practical sagacity and hard-minded goodness ruthlessly bent on doing the Lord's work by the methods of a police magistrate, Christmas carols are still sung; and the organization of virtue in numberless societies with presidents and secretaries, and, above all, with treasurers, has not dimmed the glow of the love which bears fruit in a forest of Christmas trees, with mobs of merry children shouting around them.

The plain truth is that the world is not half so heartless as it pretends to be. In its desire to wear that air of weary omniscience which is supposed to bear witness to a wide experience of life it often pooh-poohs appeals which make its well-regulated heart beat with painful irregularity. There is as much hypocrisy in the scornful as in the sentimental; and the worldly-wise man often sniffles behind the handkerchief with which he pretends to stifle a sneeze. We pretend to have become too wise to be moved by lighted candles or stirred by children's voices singing of angels and shepherds; but in our heart of hearts the old story is dear to us, and we are eager eavesdroppers when the ancient mysteries of love and sympathy and friendship are talked about by the poets or novelists.

We speak patronizingly of those old-fashioned Christmas essays in the "Sketch Book," and we pretend to be amused by the recollection that "The Christmas Carol" once filled us with an almost insane desire to make somebody happy. But it is noticeable that the old text-books of Christmas sentiment reappear year after year in an almost endless variety of forms; and that in an age when the strong man boasts of his distrust of emotion, and the strong woman holds sentiment in the contempt one feels for out-grown toys, books that have to do with Christmas are read with

surreptitious pleasure. We apologize publicly for our interest in them and deprecate the attempt to revive a faded interest and recall a decayed tradition; but in private we read with avidity these survivals of archaic feeling and prehistoric emotion. When "The Birds' Christmas Carol" appeared, we laughed over it so as to hide our tears. Mr. Janvier's charming account of Christmas ways in Provence captivated us, and we found excuse for its tender regard for old habits and observances in the fact that Mr. Janvier has been in the habit of spending a good deal of time with a group of unworldly old poets who still dream of joy and beauty as the precious things of life, and hold to the fellowship of artists instead of forming a labor union. Mr. Thomas Nelson Page, Mr. F. Marion Crawford, and Mr. F. Hopkinson Smith have written undisguised Christmas stories with as little sense of detachment from modern life as if they were telling detective tales; and, what is more astonishing to the worldly-wise man, these stories have a glow of life, a vitality of charm and sweetness in them, that make scorn and cynicism seem cheap and vulgar. And here comes Dr. Crothers and stirs the smouldering Christmas fire into a blaze and sits down before it as if it were real logs in combustion and not a trick with gas, and makes gentle sport of the wisdom of the sceptic. These recent revivals of Christmas literature show a surprising vitality, and have met with a surprising response from a generation popularly believed to be given over to the making of money and the extirpation of human feeling. It is even said that there are men and women of such insistent hopefulness that they anticipate a time when the aged in feeling, the worn-out in sentiment, the infirm in imagination, and the crippled in heart will be brought again within sound of Christmas bells.

There is little hope of bringing in the reign of good feeling by lighting a single Christmas fire, but a long line of such fires touching the receding horizon of the past with a happy glow is like a revival of a fading memory; it makes us suddenly aware of half-forgotten associations with the days that were once full of life and rippling with merriment like a mountain stream suffused with sunlight. We surrender ourselves so completely to the noisy activities of our own age that we forget how infinitesimal a portion of time it is and how misleading its emphasis often is. It is only a point on the face of the dial; but we accept it as if it were a present eternity, a final stage in the evolution of men. That many of its sacred texts are the maxims of a short-sighted prudence, many of its major interests as short-lived as the passions of children, many of its ideas of life the cheapest parvenus in the world of thought, does not occur to us; its cynicisms are often reflections of its spiritual shallowness, and its scepticisms mere records of its meanness or corruption. Like all the times that have gone before it, it is a fragment of a fragment, and the only way to see life whole is to get away from it and look down on it as it takes its little place in the larger order of history.

In this greater order of time the long line of Christmas fires glows like a great truth binding the fleeting generations into a unity of faith and feeling. When we light our fire, we are one with our ancestors of a thousand years ago; we evade the isolation of our time and escape its provincial narrowness; we rejoin the race from whose growth we have unconsciously separated ourselves; we open long-unused rooms and are amazed to find how large the house of life is and how hospitable. It has hearth room for all experience and for every kind of emotion; for the thoughts that move

in the order of logic; for the emotions that rise and fall like great tides that flow in from the infinite; for the vigor that is born of will, and for the power evoked by discipline. It is when the different ages, with their diversities of interest and growth, send their children to sit together before the Christmas fire that we realize how wide life is, and how impossible it is for any age to compass it. The faith against which one age shuts the door stands serene and smiling in the centre of the next age; the joy which one generation denies itself lies radiant on the face of a later generation; the imagination which the reign of logic in one epoch sends into the wilderness returns with full hands to be the master of a wiser period.

Before the Christmas fire that for two thousand years has sunk into embers to blaze again into a great light at the end of the twelfth month, men are not only reunited in the unbroken continuity of their fortunes, but in the wholeness of their life; in their power of vision as well as of sight, in their power of feeling as well as of thought, in their power of love as well as of action.

This large hospitality of the Christmas fire, before which kings and beggars sit at ease and every human faculty finds its place, makes room for every gift and grace; for reason, with severe and wrinkled face; for sentiment, tender and reverent of all sweet and beautiful things; for the imagination, seeing heavenly visions, and the fancy catching glimpses of quaint or grotesque or fairy-like images, in the flame; for poetry, singing full-throated with Milton, or homely, familiar and domestic with the makers of the carols; for the story-tellers, spinning their fascinating tales within the circle of the embracing glow; for humor, full of smiles or filling the room with Homeric laughter; for

the players, whose mimic art shows the manger, the shepherds and the kings to successive generations crowding the playhouse with the eager joy of children or with the sacred memories of age; for the preachers, to whom the season brings a text apart from the disputes and antagonisms of the schools and churches; for companies of children, impatiently waiting for the mysterious noise in the chimney; and for graybeards recalling old days and ways, — yule logs, country dances, waits singing under the frosty sky, stage coaches bearing guests and hampers filled with dainties to country houses standing with open doors and broad hearths for the fun and frolic, the tenderness and sentiment, the poetry and piety, of Christmas-tide.

At the end of nearly two thousand years Christmas shows no signs of decrepitude or weariness; its danger lies not in forgetfulness but in perverted uses and overstimulated activities. Its commercial availability is pushed so far that its sentiment often loses spontaneity and charm in excessive organization and prodigal distribution. The Christmas shopper suffers such a perversion of feeling that she hates the season she ought to bless; and the modern Santa Claus is so intent on the ingenuity or the cost of his gifts that he overlooks the only gift that warms the heart and translates Christmas into the vernacular.

If Christmas is to be saved from desecration and kept sacred, not only to faith but to friendship, its sentiment must be revived year by year in the joyful celebration of the old rites. We have been so eager of late years to rid ourselves of superstition and "see things as they are," that we have lost that vision of the large relations of things in which alone their meaning and use is revealed. We have studied the field at our doorsteps so thoroughly that we have

lost sight of the landscape in which its little cup of fruitfulness is poured as into a great bowl rimmed by the horizon. One day out of three hundred and sixty-five, detached from its ancient history and isolated from the celebrations of centuries, cannot keep our hearts and hearths warm; we must rekindle the old fires and join hands with the vanished companies of friends who have kept the day and made it merry in the long ago. The echoes of ancient song and laughter give it a rich merriment, a ripe and tender wealth of associations. The mirth of one Christmas overflows into another until the sense of an unbroken joy, sinking and rising year after year like the tide of life in the fields, is borne in upon us. This sense of the unity of men in the great experiences steals back again into our hearts when we hear the old songs and read the old stories. Alexander Smith, whose book of essays, "Dreamthorp," is one of the books of the heart, — for there are books of the heart as well as books of knowledge and books of power, — kindled his imagination into a responsive glow by rereading every Christmas Day Milton's "Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity." When one opens the volume at this great song, it is like going into a church and hearing the organ played by unseen hands; the silence is flooded by a vast music which lifts the heart into the presence of great mysteries. But there is a time for private devotions as well as for public worship, for domestic as well as religious celebrations; and for every hour and place and mood there is a song and story. There are tender hymns for the devout, and spirited songs for those who celebrate together old days and ancient friendships; there are quaint carols for those whose hearts long for the quiet and pleasant ways of an olden time, and there are roaring catches for those whose gayety rises to the flood;

there are meditations for the solitary, and there are stories for the little groups about the fire.

A Book of Christmas is a text-book of piety, friendship, merriment; a record of the real business of the race, which is not to make money, but to make life full and sweet and satisfying. It is a book to put into the hands of young men eager to start on the race and of young women to whom the future holds out a dazzling vision of a prosperity of pleasure and success; for it translates the word on all lips into its only comprehensible terms. In the glow of the Christmas fire the man who has made a fortune without making friends is a tragic failure, and the woman who has won the place and power she saw shining with delusive splendor on the far horizon and missed happiness faces one of life's bitterest ironies. It is a book for those who have fallen under the delusion that action is the only form of effective expression, and that to be useful one must rush along the road with the ruthless speed of an automobile; forgetting that action is only a path to being, and that the joy of life is largely found by the way. It is a book for those ardent spirits to whom the one interest in life is making people over and fitting them into their places in a rigid order of arbitrary goodness, forgetting that to the heart of a child the Kingdom of Heaven is always open, and the ultimate grace of it is the purity which is free and unconscious. It is a book for the sceptical and cynical, whose blighted sympathy and insight regain their vitality in the atmosphere of its love and kindness, its fun and frolic, its fellowship of loyal hearts and true.

Above all, the Book of Christmas is a book of joy in the sadness of the world, a book of play in the work of the world, a book of consolation in the sorrow of the world.

HAMILTON W. MABIE

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I

SIGNS OF THE SEASON



SIGNS OF THE SEASON

An Hue and Cry after Christmas
The Doge's Christmas Shooting
Thursday Processions in Advent
The Glastonbury Thorn
In the Kitchen
Christmas in England
Christmas Invitation
A Christmas Market
The Star of Bethlehem in Holland
The Pickwick Club goes down to Dingley Dell
A Visit from St. Nicholas
Crowded Out


GEORGE MORTON EDWARDS

THE time draws near the birth of Christ:
The moon is hid; the night is still;
The Christmas bells from hill to hill
Answer each other in the mist.

Four voices of four hamlets round,
From far and near, on mead and moor,
Swell out and fail, as if a door
Were shut between me and the sound:

Each voice four changes on the wind,
That now dilate, and now decrease,
Peace and goodwill, goodwill and peace,
Peace and goodwill, to all mankind.

ALFRED TENNYSON

> *"Any man or woman . . . that can give any knowledge, or tell any tidings, of an old, old, very old gray-bearded gentleman, called Christmas, who was wont to be a verie familiar ghest, and visite all sorts of people both pore and rich, and used to appear in glittering gold, silk, and silver, in the Court, and in all shapes in the Theater in Whitehall, and had ringing, feasts, and jollitie in all places, both in the citie and countrie, for his comming: . . . whosoever can tel what is become of him, or where he may be found, let them bring him back againe into England."*

THAT curious little tract "An Hue and Cry after Christmas" bears the date of 1645; and we shall best give our readers an idea of its character by setting out that title at length, as the same exhibits a tolerable abstract of its contents. It runs thus: "The arraignment, conviction, and imprisoning of Christmas on St. Thomas day last, and how he broke out of prison in the holidayes and got away, onely left his hoary hair and gray beard sticking between two iron bars of a window. With an Hue and Cry after Christmas, and a letter from Mr. Woodcock, a fellow in Oxford, to a malignant lady in London. And divers passages between the lady and the cryer about Old Christmas; and what shift he was fain to make to save his life, and great stir to fetch him back again. Printed by Simon Minc'd Pye for Cissely Plum-Porridge, and are to be sold by Ralph Fidler Chandler at the signe of the Pack of Cards in Mustard Alley in Brawn Street."

Besides the allusions contained in the latter part of this title to some of the good things that follow in the old man's train, great pains are taken by the "cryer" in describing him, and by the lady in mourning for him, to allude to

many of the cheerful attributes that made him dear to the people. His great antiquity and portly appearance are likewise insisted upon. "For age this hoarie-headed man was of great yeares, and as white as snow. He entered the Romish Kallendar, time out of mind, as old or very neer as Father Mathusalem was, — one that looked fresh in the Bishops' time, though their fall made him pine away ever since. He was full and fat as any divine doctor of them all; he looked under the consecrated lawne sleeves as big as Bul-beefe, — just like Bacchus upon a tunne of wine, when the grapes hang shaking about his eares; but since the Catholike liquor is taken from him he is much wasted, so that he hath looked very thin and ill of late." "The poor," says the "cryer" to the lady, "are sory for" his departure; "for they go to every door a-begging, as they were wont to do (*good Mrs., Somewhat against this good time*); but Time was transformed, *Away, be gone; here is not for you.*" The lady, however, declares that she for one will not be deterred from welcoming old Christmas. "No, no!" says she; "bid him come by night over the Thames, and we will have a back-door open to let him in;" and ends by anticipating better prospects for him another year.

T. K. Hervey

The Doge's Christmas Shooting

AT certain fixed times the Doge was allowed the relaxation of shooting, but with so many restrictions and injunctions that the sport must have been intolerably irksome. He was allowed or, more strictly speaking, was ordered to proceed for this purpose, and about Christmas

time, to certain islets in the lagoons, where wild ducks bred in great numbers. On his return he was obliged to present each member of the Great Council with five ducks. This was called the gift of the "Oselle," that being the name given by the people to the birds in question. In 1521, about five thousand brace of birds had to be killed or snared in order to fulfil this requirement; and if the unhappy Doge was not fortunate enough, with his attendants, to secure the required number, he was obliged to provide them by buying them elsewhere and at any price, for the claims of the Great Council had to be satisfied in any case. This was often an expensive affair.

There was also another personage who could not have derived much enjoyment from the Christmas shooting. This was the Doge's chamberlain, whose duty it was to see to the just distribution of the game, so that each bunch of two-and-a-half brace should contain a fair average of fat and thin birds, lest it should be said that the Doge showed favour to some members of the Council more than to others.

By and by a means was sought of commuting this annual tribute of ducks. The Doge Antonio Grimani requested and obtained permission to coin a medal of the value of a quarter of a ducat, equal to about four shillings or one dollar, and to call it "a Duck," "Osella," whereby it was signified that it took the place of the traditional bird.

F. Marion Crawford in *Salve Venetia!*

Thursday Processions in Advent

THE Eve of the festival of St. Nicholas, December 5, in mediæval days was the occasion when choir and altar boys met and in solemn mimicry of the procedure of

their elders elected a boy-bishop and his prebendaries who remained in office and moreover exercised practically full episcopal functions until Holy Innocents Day.

In the full vestments of the church these minor clergy made "visitations" in the neighborhood usually on three successive Thursdays, and collected small sums of money known as the "Bishop's Subsidy." Says Barnaby Googe: —

"Three weeks before the day whereon was borne the Lorde of Grace,
And on the Thursdays boyes and gyrles do runne in every place
And bounce and beat at every doore, with blowes and lustie snaps
And crie the Advent of the Lord, not borne as yet perhaps,
And wishing to the neighbors all, that in the houses dwell,
A happy year, and everything to spring and prosper well;
Here have they peares, and plumbs and pence, each man gives willinglie,
For these three nights are always thought unfortunate to bee,
Where in they are afrayde of sprites, cankred witches spight,
And dreadful devils blacke and grim, that then have chiefest might.

* * * * * * *

In these same dayes yong, wanton gyrles that meete for marriage bee,
Doe search to know the names of them that shall their husbands bee
Four onyons, five, or eight, they take, and make in every one
Such names as they do fansie most and best do think upon;
Thus neere the chimney them they set, and that same onyon than,
That first doth sproute, doth surely beare the name of their good man."

In these same December nights it is that these "yong gyrles," according to Barnaby, creep to the woodpile after nightfall and at random each pulls out the first stick the hand touches.

'Which if it streight and even be, and have no knots at all,
A gentle husband then they thinke shall surlie to them fall;

But if it fowle and crooked bee, and knotties here and there,
A crabbed churlish husband then they earnestly do feare."

In the last days before Christmas, says Lady Morgan, Italian *pifferari* descend from the mountains to Naples and Rome in order to play their pipes before the pictures of the Virgin and the Child, and — out of compliment to Joseph — in front of the carpenters' shops.

Somewhat akin is the old English custom of the carrying about the images of the Virgin and Christ in the week before Christmas, by poor women who expect a dole from every house visited.

In certain parts of Normandy the farmers give to their children, or to little ones borrowed from their neighbors, prepared torches, well dried; with which these little folk — no one over twelve is eligible for the office — run hither and yon, under the tree boughs, into fence corners, singing the spell supposed to command the vermin of the field. W. S. Walsh gives this translation of their incantation: —

Mice, caterpillars, and moles,
Get out, get out of my field; or
I will burn your blood and bones:
Trees and shrubs,
Give me bushels of apples.

Condensed from *Some Curiosities of Popular Customs.*

The Glastonbury Thorn and other Plant Lore of Christmastide

THE legend of the Glastonbury Thorn is that after the death of Christ Joseph of Arimathea came over to England and a few days before Christmas rested on the

summit of Weary-all Hill, Glastonbury. There he thrust into the ground his staff which on Christmas Eve was found to be covered with snow white blossoms; and until it was destroyed during the Civil wars the bush continued so to bloom, as cuttings from the original thorn are said to bloom in the same wonderful way even yet; but, with a fine disregard for the Gregorian reformation of the Calendar, the blossoms do not appear until the 5th of January.

The Sicilian children, so Folkard tells us, put pennyroyal in their cots on Christmas Eve, "under the belief that at the exact hour and minute when the infant Jesus was born this plant puts forth its blossom." Another belief is that the blossoming occurs again on Midsummer Night.

In the East the Rose of Jericho is looked upon with favour by women with child, for "there is a cherished legend that it first blossomed at our Saviour's birth, closed at the Crucifixion, and opened again at Easter, whence its name of Resurrection Flower."

Gerarde, the old herbalist, tells us that the black hellebore is called "Christ's Herb," or "Christmas Herb," because it "flowreth about the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Many plants, trees, and flowers owe their peculiarities to their connection with the birth or the childhood of Christ. The *Ornithogalum umbellatum* is called the "Star of Bethlehem," according to Folkard, because "its white stellate flowers resemble the pictures of the star that indicated the birth of the Saviour of mankind." The *Galium verum*, "Our Lady's Bedstraw," receives its name from the belief that the manger in which the infant Jesus lay was filled with this plant.

"The brooms and the chick-peas began to rustle and

crackle, and by this noise betrayed the fugitives. The flax bristled up. Happily for her, Mary was near a juniper; the hospitable tree opened its branches as arms and enclosed the Virgin and the Child within their folds, affording them a secure hiding-place. Then the Virgin uttered a malediction against the brooms and the chick-peas, and ever since that day they have always rustled and crackled." The story goes on to tell us that the Virgin "pardoned the flax its weakness, and gave the juniper her blessing," which accounts for the use of the latter in some countries for Christmas decorations, — like the holly in England and France.

"One Christmas Eve a peasant felt a great desire to eat cabbage and, having none himself, he slipped into a neighbour's garden to cut some. Just as he had filled his basket, the Christ-Child rode past on his white horse, and said: 'Because thou hast stolen on the holy night, thou shalt immediately sit in the moon with thy basket of cabbage.'" And so, we are told, "the culprit was immediately wafted up to the moon," and there he can still be seen as "the man in the moon."

ALEXANDER F. CHAMBERLAIN

The Signs of the Season in the Kitchen

"THE cooks shall be busied, by day and by night,
In roasting and boiling, for taste and delight,
Their senses in liquor that's happy they'll steep,
Though they be afforded to have little sleep;
They still are employed for to dress us, in brief,
Plum-pudding, goose, capon, minc'd-pies, and roast beef.

"Although the cold weather doth hunger provoke,
'Tis a comfort to see how the chimneys do smoke;
Provision is making for beer, ale, and wine,
For all that are willing or ready to dine:
Then haste to the kitchen for diet the chief,
Plum-pudding, goose, capon, minc'd-pies, and roast beef.

"All travellers, as they do pass on their way,
At gentlemen's halls are invited to stay,
Themselves to refresh and their horses to rest,
Since that he must be old Christmas's guest;
Nay, the poor shall not want, but have for relief
Plum-pudding, goose, capon, minc'd-pies, and roast beef."

From EVANS' *Collection of English Ballads*

Christmas in England

THERE is nothing in England that exercises a more delightful spell over my imagination than the lingerings of the holiday customs and rural games of former times. They recall the pictures my fancy used to draw in the May morning of life when as yet I only knew the world through books, and believed it to be all that poets had painted it; and they bring with them the flavour of those honest days of yore, in which, perhaps with equal fallacy, I am apt to think the world was more home-bred, social, and joyous than at present. I regret to say that they are daily growing more and more faint, being gradually worn away by time, but still more obliterated by modern fashion. They resemble those picturesque morsels of Gothic architecture which we see crumbling in various parts of the country, partly dilapidated by the waste of ages, and

partly lost in the additions and alterations of latter days. Poetry, however, clings with cherishing fondness about the rural game and holiday revel, from which it has derived so many of its themes — as the ivy winds its rich foliage about the Gothic arch and mouldering tower, gratefully repaying their support by clasping together their tottering remains, and, as it were, embalming them in verdure.

Of all the old festivals, however, that of Christmas awakens the strongest and most heartfelt associations. There is a tone of solemn and sacred feeling that blends with our conviviality, and lifts the spirit to a state of hallowed and elevated enjoyment. The services of the church about this season are extremely tender and inspiring. They dwell on the beautiful story of the origin of our faith, and the pastoral scenes that accompanied its announcement. They gradually increase in fervour and pathos during the season of Advent, until they break forth in jubilee on the morning that brought peace and good-will to men. I do not know a grander effect of music on the moral feelings than to hear the full choir and the pealing organ performing a Christmas anthem in a cathedral, and filling every part of the vast pile with triumphant harmony.

It is a beautiful arrangement, also derived from days of yore, that this festival, which commemorates the announcement of the religion of peace and love, has been made the season for gathering together of family connections, and drawing closer again those bonds of kindred hearts which the cares and pleasures and sorrows of the world are continually operating to cast loose; of calling back the children of a family who have launched forth in life, and wandered widely asunder, once more to assemble about the paternal hearth, that rallying-place of the affections, there

to grow young and loving again among the endearing mementoes of childhood.

There is something in the very season of the year that gives a charm to the festivity of Christmas. At other times we derive a great portion of our pleasures from the mere beauties of nature.

* * * * * * *

In the course of a December tour in Yorkshire, I rode for some distance in one of the public coaches, on the day preceding Christmas. The coach was crowded, both inside and out, with passengers, who, by their talk, seemed principally bound to the mansions of relations and friends to eat the Christmas dinner. It was loaded also with hampers of game, and baskets and boxes of delicacies; and hares hung dangling their long ears about the coachman's box — presents from distant friends for the impending feasts. I had three fine rosy-cheeked schoolboys for my fellow-passengers inside, full of the buxom health and manly spirits which I have observed in the children of this country. They were returning home for the holidays in high glee, and promising themselves a world of enjoyment. It was delightful to hear the gigantic plans of pleasure of the little rogues, and the impracticable feats they were to perform during their six weeks' emancipation from the abhorred thraldom of book, birch, and pedagogue. They were full of anticipations of the meeting with the family and household, down to the very cat and dog; and of the joy they were to give their little sisters by the presents with which their pockets were crammed; but the meeting to which they seemed to look forward with the greatest impatience was with Bantam, which I found to be a pony, and, according to their talk, possessed of more

virtues than any steed since the days of Bucephalus. How he could trot! how he could run! and then such leaps as he would take — there was not a hedge in the whole country that he could not clear.

They were under the particular guardianship of the coachman, to whom, whenever an opportunity presented, they addressed a host of questions, and pronounced him one of the best fellows in the whole world. Indeed, I could not but notice the more than ordinary air of bustle and importance of the coachman, who wore his hat a little on one side, and had a large bunch of Christmas greens stuck in the button-hole of his coat. He is always a personage full of mighty care and business, and he is particularly so during this season, having so many commissions to execute in consequence of the great interchange of presents.

* * * * * * *

Perhaps the impending holiday might have given a more than usual animation to the country, for it seemed to me as if everybody was in good looks and good spirits. Game, poultry, and other luxuries of the table, were in brisk circulation in the villages; the grocers', butchers', and fruiterers' shops were thronged with customers. The housewives were stirring briskly about, putting their dwellings in order; and the glossy branches of holly, with their bright red berries, began to appear at the windows. The scene brought to mind an old writer's account of Christmas preparations: — "Now capons and hens, besides turkeys, geese, and ducks, with beef and mutton — must all die; for in twelve days a multitude of people will not be fed with a little. Now plums and spice, sugar and honey, square it among pies and broth. Now or never must music be in

tune, for the youth must dance and sing to get them a heat, while the aged sit by the fire. The country maid leaves half her market, and must be sent again, if she forgets a pack of cards on Christmas eve. Great is the contention of Holly and Ivy, whether master or dame wears the breeches. Dice and cards benefit the butler; and if the cook do not lack wit, he will sweetly lick his fingers."

WASHINGTON IRVING

Christmas Invitation

COME down to marra night, an' mind
Don't leave thy fiddle-bag behind.
We'll shiake a lag an' drink a cup
O' yal to kip wold Chris'mas up.

An' let thy sister tiake thy yarm,
The wa'k woont do 'er any harm:
Ther's noo dirt now to spwile her frock
Var 'tis a-vroze so hard's a rock.

Ther bent noo stranngers that 'ull come,
But only a vew naighbours: zome
Vrom Stowe, an' Combe, an' two ar dree
Vrom uncles up at Rookery.

An' thee woot vine a ruozy fiace,
An' pair ov eyes so black as sloos,
The pirtiest oones in al the pliace.
I'm sure I needen tell thee whose.

We got a back bran', dree girt logs
So much as dree ov us can car:
We'll put 'em up athirt the dogs,
An' miake a vier to the bar,



THE HOLY NIGHT. *C. Müller.*

An' ev'ry oone wull tell his tiale,
An' ev'ry oone wull zing his zong,
An' ev'ry oone wull drink his yal,
To love an' frien'ship al night long.

We'll snap the tongs, we'll have a bal,
We'll shiake the house, we'll rise the ruf,
We'll romp an' miake the maidens squal,
A catchen o'm at bline-man's buff.

Zoo come to marra night, an' mind
Don't leave thy fiddle-bag behind.
We'll shiake a lag, an' drink a cup
O' yal to kip wold Chris'mas up.

WILLIAM BARNES

A Christmas Market

OUT of doors the various market-places are covered with little stalls selling cheap clothing, cheap toys, jewellery, sweets, and gingerbread; all the heterogeneous rubbish you have seen a thousand times at German fairs, and never tire of seeing if a fair delights you.

But better than the Leipziger Messe, better even than a summer market at Freiburg or at Heidelberg, is a Christmas market in any one of the old German cities in the hill country, when the streets and the open places are covered with crisp clean snow, and the mountains are white with it, and the moon shines on the ancient houses, and the tinkle of sledge bells reaches you when you escape from the din of the market, and look down at the bustle of it from some silent place, a high window, perhaps, or the high empty steps leading into the cathedral. The air is cold and still,

and heavy with the scent of the Christmas trees brought from the forest for the pleasure of the children. Day by day you see the rows of them growing thinner, and if you go to the market on Christmas Eve itself you will find only a few trees left out in the cold. The market is empty, the peasants are harnessing their horses or their oxen, the women are packing up their unsold goods. In every home in the city one of the trees that scented the open air a week ago is shining now with lights and little gilded nuts and apples, and is helping to make that Christmas smell, all compact of the pine forest, wax candles, cakes, and painted toys, you must associate so long as you live with Christmas in Germany.

MRS. ALFRED SIDGWICK in *Home Life in Germany*

The Star of Bethlehem as Seen in Holland

THE Star of Bethlehem, as seen in Holland, is a pretty but a cheap sight, for it costs nothing. 'Tis the Harbinger of Christmas — a huge illuminated star which is carried through the silent, dark, Dutch streets, shining upon the crowding people, and typical of the star which once guided the wise men of the East.

The young men of a Dutch town who go to the expense of this star, which, carried through the streets, is the signal that Christmas has come once again, are swayed by the full intention of turning the Star of Bethlehem to account.

They gather money for the poor from the crowds who come out to welcome the symbol of peace, and having done this for the good of those whom fortune has not befriended, they betake them to the head burgomaster of the town, who is bound to set down the youths who form the Star

company to a very comfortable meal. 'Tis a great institution, the Star of Bethlehem, in many Dutch towns and cities; and may it never die out, for it does harm to no man, and good to many.

Bow-Bells Annual

The Pickwick Club goes down to keep Christmas at Dingley Dell

AS brisk as bees, if not altogether as light as fairies, did the four Pickwickians assemble on the morning of the twenty-second day of December, in the year of grace in which these, their faithfully-recorded adventures, were undertaken and accomplished. Christmas was close at hand, in all his bluff and hearty honesty; it was the season of hospitality, merriment, and open-heartedness; the old year was preparing, like an ancient philosopher, to call his friends around him, and amidst the sound of feasting and revelry to pass gently and calmly away. Gay and merry was the time; and right gay and merry were at least four of the numerous hearts that were gladdened by its coming.

* * * * * * *

The portmanteaus and carpet-bags have been stowed away, and Mr. Weller and the guard are endeavouring to insinuate into the fore-boot a huge cod-fish several sizes too large for it, which is snugly packed up, in a long brown basket, with a layer of straw over the top, and which has been left to the last, in order that he may repose in safety on the half-dozen barrels of real native oysters, all the property of Mr. Pickwick, which have been arranged in regular order, at the bottom of the receptacle. The

interest displayed in Mr. Pickwick's countenance is most intense, as Mr. Weller and the guard try to squeeze the cod-fish into the boot, first head first, and then tail first, and then top upwards, and then bottom upwards, and then side-ways, and then long-ways, all of which artifices the implacable cod-fish sturdily resists, until the guard accidentally hits him in the very middle of the basket, whereupon he suddenly disappears into the boot, and with him, the head and shoulders of the guard himself, who, not calculating upon so sudden a cessation of the passive resistance of the cod-fish, experiences a very unexpected shock, to the unsmotherable delight of all the porters and by-standers. Upon this, Mr. Pickwick smiles with great good humour, and drawing a shilling from his waistcoat pocket, begs the guard, as he picks himself out of the boot, to drink his health in a glass of hot brandy and water, at which the guard smiles too, and Messrs. Snodgrass, Winkle, and Tupman, all smile in company. The guard and Mr. Weller disappear for five minutes, most probably to get the hot brandy and water, for they smell very strongly of it, when they return; the coachman mounts to the box, Mr. Weller jumps up behind, the Pickwickians pull their coats round their legs, and their shawls over their noses; the helpers pull the horse-cloths off, the coachman shouts out a cheery "All right," and away they go.

They have rumbled through the streets, and jolted over the stones, and at length reach the wide and open country. The wheels skim over the hard and frosty ground; and the horses, bursting into a canter at a smart crack of the whip, step along the road as if the load behind them, coach, passengers, cod-fish, oyster barrels, and all, were but a feather at their heels. They have descended a gentle

slope, and enter upon a level, as compact and dry as a solid block of marble, two miles long. Another crack of the whip, and on they speed, at a smart gallop, the horses tossing their heads and rattling the harness as if in exhilaration at the rapidity of the motion, while the coachman holding whip and reins in one hand, takes off his hat with the other, and resting it on his knees, pulls out his handkerchief, and wipes his forehead partly because he has a habit of doing it, and partly because it's as well to show the passengers how cool he is, and what an easy thing it is to drive four-in-hand, when you have had as much practice as he has. Having done this very leisurely (otherwise the effect would be materially impaired), he replaces his handkerchief, pulls on his hat, adjusts his gloves, squares his elbows, cracks the whip again, and on they speed, more merrily than before.

A few small houses scattered on either side of the road, betoken the entrance to some town or village. The lively notes of the guard's key-bugle vibrate in the clear cold air, and wake up the old gentleman inside, who carefully letting down the window-sash half way, and standing sentry over the air, takes a short peep out, and then carefully pulling it up again, informs the other inside that they're going to change directly; on which the other inside wakes himself up, and determines to postpone his next nap until after the stoppage. Again the bugle sounds lustily forth, and rouses the cottager's wife and children, who peep out at the house-door, and watch the coach till it turns the corner, when they once more crouch round the blazing fire, and throw on another log of wood against father comes home, while father himself, a full mile off, has just exchanged a friendly nod with the coachman, and turned

round, to take a good long stare at the vehicle as it whirls away.

And now the bugle plays a lively air as the coach rattles through the ill-paved streets of a country town; and the coachman, undoing the buckle which keeps his ribands together, prepares to throw them off the moment he stops. Mr. Pickwick emerges from his coat collar, and looks about him with great curiosity: perceiving which, the coachman informs Mr. Pickwick of the name of the town, and tells him it was market-day yesterday, both which pieces of information Mr. Pickwick retails to his fellow-passengers, whereupon they emerge from their coat collars too, and look about them also. Mr. Winkle, who sits at the extreme edge, with one leg dangling in the air, is nearly precipitated into the street, as the coach twists round the sharp corner by the cheesemonger's shop, and turns into the market-place; and before Mr. Snodgrass, who sits next to him, has recovered from his alarm, they pull up at the inn yard, where the fresh horses, with cloths on, are already waiting. The coachman throws down the reins and gets down himself, and the other outside passengers drop down also, except those who have no great confidence in their ability to get up again, and they remain where they are, and stamp their feet against the coach to warm them; looking with longing eyes and red noses at the bright fire in the inn bar, and the sprigs of holly with red berries which ornament the window.

But the guard has delivered at the corn-dealer's shop, the brown paper packet he took out of the little pouch which hangs over his shoulder by a leathern strap, and has seen the horses carefully put to, and has thrown on the pavement the saddle which was brought from London on the

coach-roof, and has assisted in the conference between the coachman and the hostler about the grey mare that hurt her off-fore-leg last Tuesday, and he and Mr. Weller are all right behind, and the coachman is all right in front, and the old gentleman inside, who has kept the window down full two inches all this time, has pulled it up again, and the cloths are off, and they are all ready for starting, except the "two stout gentlemen," whom the coachman enquires after with some impatience. Hereupon the coachman and the guard, and Sam Weller, and Mr. Winkle, and Mr. Snodgrass, and all the hostlers, and every one of the idlers, who are more in number than all the others put together, shout for the missing gentlemen as loud as they can bawl. A distant response is heard from the yard, and Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Tupman come running down it, quite out of breath, for they have been having a glass of ale a-piece, and Mr. Pickwick's fingers are so cold that he has been full five minutes before he could find the sixpence to pay for it. The coachman shouts an admonitory "Now, then, gen'l-m'n," the guard re-echoes it — the old gentleman inside, thinks it a very extraordinary thing that people will get down when they know there isn't time for it — Mr. Pickwick struggles up on one side, Mr. Tupman on the other, Mr. Winkle cries "All right," and off they start. Shawls are pulled up, coat collars are re-adjusted, the pavement ceases, the houses disappear; and they are once again dashing along the open road, with the fresh clear air blowing in their faces, and gladdening their very hearts within them.

Such was the progress of Mr. Pickwick and his friends by the Muggleton Telegraph, on their way to Dingley Dell; and at three o'clock that afternoon, they all stood

high and dry, safe and sound, hale and hearty, upon the steps of the Blue Lion, having taken on the road enough of ale and brandy, to enable them to bid defiance to the frost that was binding up the earth in its iron fetters, and weaving its beautiful network upon the trees and hedges.

CHARLES DICKENS

A Visit from St. Nicholas

'TWAS the night before Christmas, when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;
The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads;
And mamma in her kerchief, and I in my cap,
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap —
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.
The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow
Gave a lustre of midday to objects below;
When what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer,
With a little old driver, so lively and quick
I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick!
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled and shouted, and called them by name:
"Now, Dasher! now, Dancer! now, Prancer and Vixen!
On, Comet! on, Cupid! on, Donder and Blitzen!

To the top of the porch, to the top of the wall!
Now dash away, dash away, dash away all!"
As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky,
So up to the house-top the coursers they flew,
With the sleigh full of toys — and St. Nicholas, too.
And then in a twinkling I heard on the roof
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.
As I drew in my head, and turning around,
Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.
He was dressed all in fur from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot;
A bundle of toys he had flung on his back,
And he looked like a peddler just opening his pack.
His eyes, how they twinkled! his dimples, how merry!
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry;
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
And the beard on his chin was as white as the snow.
The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath.
He had a broad face and a little round belly
That shook, when he laughed, like a bowl full of jelly.
He was chubby and plump — a right jolly old elf;
And I laughed, when I saw him, in spite of myself.
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread.
He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
And filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk,
And laying his finger aside of his nose,
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose.
He sprang in his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle;

But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight:
"Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good-night!"

CLEMENT C. MOORE

Crowded Out

NOBODY ain't Christmas shoppin'
Fur his stockin',
Nobody ain't cotch no turkkey,
Nobody ain't bake no pie.
Nobody's laid nuthin' by;
Santa Claus don't cut no figger
Fur his mammy's little nigger.

Seems lak everybody's rushin'
An' er crushin';
Crowdin' shops an' jammin' trolleys,
Buyin' shoes an' shirts an' toys
Fur de white folks' girls an' boys;
But no hobby-horse ain't rockin'
Fur his little wore-out stockin'.

He ain't quar'lin, recollec',
He don't 'spec'
Nuthin' — it's his not expectin'
Makes his mammy wish — O Laws! —
Fur er nigger Santy Claus,
Totin' jus' er toy balloon
Fur his mammy's little coon.

ROSALIE M. JONAS

II

HOLIDAY SAINTS AND LORDS



HOLIDAY SAINTS AND LORDS

My Lord of Misrule
St. Nicholas
An Old Saint in a New World
St. Thomas
Kriss Kringle
Il Santissimo Bambino
The Christ Child
The April Baby is Thankful
Good King Wenceslas
Jean Valjean plays the Christmas Saint
St. Brandan
St. Stephen's, or Boxing Day
St. Basil in Trikkola


HRI
Jesse
GEORGE WHARTON EDWARDS·09

"HERE comes old Father Christmas,
With sound of fife and drums;
With mistletoe about his brows,
So merrily he comes!"

ROSE TERRY COOKE

My Lord of Misrule

"FIRSTE," says Master Stubs, "all the wilde heades of the parishe conventynge together, chuse them a grand Capitaine (of mischeef) whom they innoble with the title of my Lorde of Misserule, and hym they crown with great solemnitie, and adopt for their kyng. This kyng anoynted, chuseth for the twentie, fourtie, threescore, or a hundred lustie guttes like hymself, to waite uppon his lordely majestie, and to guarde his noble persone. Then every one of these his menne he investeth with his liveries of greene, yellowe or some other light wanton colour. And as though that were not (baudie) gaudy enough I should saie, they bedecke themselves with scarffes, ribons and laces, hanged all over with golde rynges, precious stones and other jewelles: this doen, they tye about either legge twentie or fourtie belles with rich hankercheefes in their handes, and sometymes laied acrosse over their shoulders and neckes, borrowed for the moste parte of their pretie Mopsies and loovyng Bessies, for bussyng them in the darcke. Thus thinges sette in order, they have their hobbie horses, dragons, and other antiques, together with their baudie pipers, and thunderyng drommers, to strike up the Deville's Daunce withall" (meaning the Morris Dance), "then marche these heathen companie towardes the church and churche yarde, their pipers pipyng, drommers thonderyng, their stumppes dauncyng, their belles iynglyng, their handkerchefes swyngyng about their heades like madmen, their hobbie horses and other monsters

skyrmishyng amongst the throng: and in this sorte they goe to the churche (though the minister bee at praier or preachyng) dauncyng and swingyng their handkercheefes over their heades, in the churche, like devilles incarnate, with suche a confused noise that no man can heare his owne voice. Then the foolishe people, they looke, they stare, they laugh, they fleere, and mount upon formes and pewes, to see these goodly pageauntes, solemnized in this sort."

Quoted by T. K. Hervey

St. Nicholas

ACCORDING to Hone's "Ancient Mysteries" Saint Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, was a saint of great virtue and piety. . . . The old legend is that the sons of a rich Asiatic, on their way to Athens for education, were slain by a robber innkeeper, dismembered, and their parts hidden in a brine tub. In the morning came the Saint, whose visions had warned him of the crime, whose authority forced confession, and whose prayers restored the boys to life. The Salisbury Missal of 1534 contains a curious engraving of the scene, in which the bodies of the children are leaping from the brine tub at the Bishop's call even while the innkeeper at the table above their heads is busily cutting a leg and foot into pieces small enough for his purposes.

Ever since, St. Nicholas has been the special saint of the school-boy, and certain of the customs of montem day at Eton College are said to have originated in old festivals in his honor.

St. Nicholas is the grand patron of the children of France,

to whom he brings bonbons for the good, but a cane for the naughty child. In Germany he acts as an advance courier examining into the conduct of the children, distributes goodies and promises to those with good records a further reward which the Christ Child brings at Christmas time. But his own peculiar celebration takes place in a tiny seaport of southern Italy where it is curiously interwoven with ancient usages possibly remaining from some worship of Neptune.

On St. Nicholas's Day, the 6th of December, the sailors of the port take the saint's image from the beautiful church of St. Nicholas and with a long procession of boats carry it far out to sea. Returning with it at nightfall they are met by bonfires, torches, all the townspeople, and hundreds of quaintly dressed pilgrims, who welcome the returning saint with songs and carry him to visit one shrine after another, before returning him to the custody of the canons.

W. S. Walsh quotes a writer in Chambers' "Book of Days" as saying: "Through the native rock which formes the tomb of the saint, water constantly exudes, which is collected by the canons on a sponge attached to a reed, squeezed into bottles and sold to pilgrims as a miraculous specific under the name of the "manna of St. Nicholas."

An Old Saint in a New World

WHILE Catholicism prevailed, St. Nicholas was everywhere the children's saint. In Holland, where his personality was modified by memories of Woden, god of the elements and the harvest, he had a peculiar hold on popular affection which persisted into Protestant times. The children of the Dutch still believe that St. Nicholas

brings the gifts that they always get on the eve of his titular day, December 6. In New Amsterdam this day was one of the five chief feastdays of the year. After New Orange became New York the characteristic traits of the Dutch children's festival were transferred to the near-by Christmas festival which was English as well as Dutch. It cannot now be said when the change began or when it was firmly established. It is known, indeed, that by the middle of the eighteenth century St. Nicholas Day had been dropped from the list of official holidays which, religious and patriotic together, then numbered twenty-seven. But, on the other hand, more than one memoir and book of reminiscences says that as late as the middle of the nineteenth century some conservative old Dutch families still celebrated the true St. Nicholas Day in their homes in the true old fashion, then bestowing the children's annual meed of gifts. Nor is any light thrown on the question by certain entries in a local newspaper, *Rivington's Gazetteer*, dated in December, 1773 and 1774, and referring to celebrations of "the anniversary of St. Nicholas, otherwise called Santa Claus," for they speak of social meetings of the "sons of that ancient saint" in which children can hardly have participated, and they indicate days which were neither Christmas Day nor the true St. Nicholas Day.

It is clear, however, that on Manhattan by a gradual consolidation of the two old festivals Christmas became pre-eminently a children's festival presided over by the children's saint whose modern name, Santa Claus, is a variant of the Dutch St. Niclaes or San Claas. In all European countries Christmas still means simply the day of Christ's nativity; for the "Old Christmas" whom we meet in English ballads of earlier times, the "Father Christ-

mas" of Charles Dickens, and the "Père Noël" of the French are abstractly mythical figures in no way related to St. Nicholas. But anywhere in our America the domestic observance of Christmas centres around Santa Claus with his burden of gifts. The stockings that our children hang on Christmas Eve were once the shoes that the children of Amsterdam and New Amsterdam set in the chimney corners on the eve of December 6; and the reindeer whose hoofs our children hear represent the horse, descended from Woden's horse Sleipner, upon whose back St. Nicholas still makes his rounds in Holland. The Christmas-tree is not Dutch but German; about the middle of the nineteenth century we acquired it from our German immigrants. But even this the American child accepts at the hands of Santa Claus, not of the Christ Child as does the little German. "Kriss Kringle," it may be added, a name now often mistakenly used as though it were a synonym of Santa Claus, is a corruption of the German Christkindlein (Christ Child).

Mrs. Schuyler Van Rensselaer
From the *History of the City of New York*

St. Thomas

ANOTHER of the Saints of the holiday season is doubting Thomas, whose festival appropriately comes on Dec. 21, just when the child mind is almost ready to doubt the efficacy of all those letters to Santa Claus, and has more than doubts whether conduct has been so perfect as to warrant hope for the Christmas stocking.

St. Thomas seems to have remained a doubter to the end, for in the cathedral of Piato is shown the girdle of

the "Madonnadella Cintola"; her ascension into heaven took place when Thomas was not with his brother apostles, whose account of the miracle he refused to believe; whereon the indignant Madonna threw her girdle back to him from heaven as evidence, — or so the legend reads, — with the girdle to prove it.

His emblem as an apostle is a builder's rule or square; possibly associated with that other legend of the king of the Indies who ordered the saint to build him a magnificent palace. On the return of the king and his discovery that the money for this building had all been given to the poor, the saint was thrown into a dungeon. Before worse befel, the king died and four days later appeared to his heir with an account of the splendid palace of gold and precious stones built for him in heaven by the charities of the saint on earth.

W. P. R.

Kriss Kringle

JUST as the moon was fading
Amid her misty rings,
And every stocking was stuffed
With childhood's precious things,

Old Kriss Kringle looked round,
And saw on the elm-tree bough,
High-hung, an oriole's nest,
Silent and empty now.

"Quite like a stocking," he laughed,
"Pinned up there on the tree!

Little I thought the birds
 Expected a present from me!"

Then old Kriss Kringle, who loves
 A joke as well as the best,
Dropped a handful of flakes
 In the oriole's empty nest.

THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH

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Il Santissimo Bambino

"IL SANTISSIMO BAMBINO," of the *Ara Cœli* in Rome, smiles placidly with the gravity of a sphinx on all alike. Wee little folk before it clasp dimpled hands and lispingly recite their speeches of praise. Older folk lift up a prayer for the safe return of friends afar; sometimes, as a concession to the faithful — at a price — it is driven out in a bannered coach to bless the sick. If the patient is to live, the image will turn red; if he is to die, it will turn pale. Should its attendant monks by chance forget to return it to the gorgeous manger of the Franciscan church to which it belongs, perchance it will return of its own will, borne by no human hands, while all the bells of churches and convents are set a-swaying by the touch of angel hosts — or so the Roman peasants say.

In England similar images have been used in the service which follows the midnight mass of Christmas Eve; so soon as the Host is safely returned to its receptacle there is disclosed to the view of the reverently adoring monks the tiny waxen doll, elaborately swathed yet so as to leave visible the pink, expressionless face, and half hidden hands

and feet. The officiating priest lifts the image and facing the waiting monks holds it reverently while in circling procession, one after another, each bends for a moment to kiss the tiny figure on face or hands, crosses himself and passes on. The ceremony is one to be seen only among the Trappist monks and only at this one service of the Christmas season.

W. P. R.

The Christ Child

ELISE Traut relates the legend that on every Christmas eve the little Christ-child wanders all over the world bearing on its shoulders a bundle of evergreens. Through city streets and country lanes, up and down hill, to proudest castle and lowliest hovel, through cold and storm and sleet and ice, this holy child travels, to be welcomed or rejected at the doors at which he pleads for succor. Those who would invite him and long for his coming set a lighted candle in the window to guide him on his way hither. They also believe that he comes to them in the guise of any alms-craving, wandering person who knocks humbly at their doors for sustenance, thus testing their benevolence. In many places the aid rendered the beggar is looked upon as hospitality shown to Christ.

The April Baby is Thankful

DECEMBER 27th. — It is the fashion, I believe, to regard Christmas as a bore of rather a gross description, and as a time when you are invited to overeat yourself, and

pretend to be merry without just cause. As a matter of fact, it is one of the prettiest and most poetic institutions possible, if observed in the proper manner, and after having been more or less unpleasant to everybody for a whole year, it is a blessing to be forced on that one day to be amiable, and it is certainly delightful to be able to give presents without being haunted by the conviction that you are spoiling the recipient, and will suffer for it afterward. Servants are only big children, and are made just as happy as children by little presents and nice things to eat, and, for days beforehand, every time the three babies go into the garden they expect to meet the Christ Child with His arms full of gifts. They firmly believe that it is thus their presents are brought, and it is such a charming idea that Christmas would be worth celebrating for its sake alone.

As great secrecy is observed, the preparations devolve entirely on me, and it is not very easy work, with so many people in our own house and on each of the farms, and all the children, big and little, expecting their share of happiness. The library is uninhabitable for several days before and after, as it is there that we have the trees and presents. All down one side are the trees, and the other three sides are lined with tables, a separate one for each person in the house. When the trees are lighted, and stand in their radiance shining down on the happy faces, I forget all the trouble it has been, and the number of times I have had to run up and down stairs, and the various aches in head and feet, and enjoy myself as much as anybody. First the June baby is ushered in, then the others and ourselves according to age, then the servants, then come the head inspector and his family, and other inspectors from the different farms, the mamsells, the bookkeepers and secretaries, and

then all the children, troops and troops of them — the big ones leading the little ones by the hand and carrying the babies in their arms, and the mothers peeping round the door. As many as can get in stand in front of the trees, and sing two or three carols; then they are given their presents, and go off triumphantly, making room for the next batch. My three babies sang lustily too, whether they happened to know what was being sung or not. They had on white dresses in honour of the occasion, and the June baby was even arrayed in a low-necked and short-sleeved garment, after the manner of Teutonic infants, whatever the state of the thermometer. Her arms are like miniature prize-fighter's arms — I never saw such things; they are the pride and joy of her little nurse, who had tied them up with blue ribbons, and kept on kissing them. I shall certainly not be able to take her to balls when she grows up, if she goes on having arms like that.

When they came to say good-night, they were all very pale and subdued. The April baby had an exhausted-looking Japanese doll with her, which she said she was taking to bed, not because she liked him, but because she was so sorry for him, he seemed so very tired. They kissed me absently, and went away, only the April baby glancing at the trees as she passed and making them a curtesy.

"Good-bye, trees," I heard her say; and then she made the Japanese doll bow to them, which he did, in a very languid and blasé fashion. "You'll never see such trees again," she told him, giving him a vindictive shake, "for you'll be brokened long before next time."

She went out, but came back as though she had forgotten something.



THE ARRIVAL OF THE SHEPHERDS. *Lerolle.*

"Thank the Christkind so much, Mummy, won't you, for all the lovely things He brought us. I suppose you're writing to Him now, isn't you?"

From *Elizabeth and her German Garden*

Good King Wenceslas

GOOD King Wenceslas looked out,
On the Feast of Stephen,
When the snow lay round about,
Deep, and crisp, and even:

Brightly shone the moon that night,
Though the frost was cruel,
When a poor man came in sight,
Gath'ring winter fuel.

"Hither, page, and stand by me,
If thou know'st it, telling,
Yonder peasant, who is he?
Where and what his dwelling?"

"Sire, he lives a good league hence,
Underneath the mountain;
Right against the forest fence,
By St. Agnes' fountain."

"Bring me flesh, and bring me wine,
Bring me pine logs hither;
Thou and I will see him dine,
When we bear them thither."

Page and monarch forth they went,
Forth they went together;

Through the rude wind's wild lament,
And the bitter weather.

"Sire, the night is darker now,
And the wind blows stronger;
Fails my heart, I know not how,
I can go no longer."

"Mark my footsteps, good my page!
Tread thou in them boldly;
Thou shalt find the winter's rage
Freeze thy blood less coldly."

In his master's steps he trod,
Where the snow lay dinted;
Heat was in the very sod
Which the saint had printed.

Therefore, Christian men, be sure,
Wealth or rank possessing,
Ye who now will bless the poor,
Shall yourselves find blessing.

Version by JOHN MASON NEALE

Jean Valjean plays the Christmas Saint

AS for the traveller, he had deposited his cudgel and his bundle in a corner. The landlord once gone, he threw himself into an arm-chair and remained for some time buried in thought. Then he removed his shoes, took one of the two candles, blew out the other, opened the door, and quitted the room, gazing about him like a person who is in search of something. He traversed a corridor

and came upon a staircase. There he heard a very faint and gentle sound like the breathing of a child. He followed this sound, and came to a sort of triangular recess built under the staircase, or rather formed by the staircase itself. This recess was nothing else than the space under the steps. There, in the midst of all sorts of old papers and potsherds, among dust and spiders' webs, was a bed — if one can call by the name of bed a straw pallet so full of holes as to display the straw, and a coverlet so tattered as to show the pallet. No sheets. This was placed on the floor.

In this bed Cosette was sleeping.

The man approached and gazed down upon her.

Cosette was in a profound sleep; she was fully dressed. In the winter she did not undress, in order that she might not be so cold.

Against her breast was pressed the doll, whose large eyes, wide open, glittered in the dark. From time to time she gave vent to a deep sigh as though she were on the point of waking, and she strained the doll almost convulsively in her arms. Beside her bed there was only one of her wooden shoes.

A door which stood open near Cosette's pallet permitted a view of a rather large, dark room. The stranger stepped into it. At the further extremity, through a glass door, he saw two small, very white beds. They belonged to Éponine and Azelma. Behind these beds, and half hidden, stood an uncurtained wicker cradle, in which the little boy who had cried all the evening lay asleep.

The stranger conjectured that this chamber connected with that of the Thénardier pair. He was on the point of retreating when his eye fell upon the fireplace — one of those vast tavern chimneys where there is always so

little fire when there is any fire at all, and which are so cold to look at. There was no fire in this one, there was not even ashes; but there was something which attracted the stranger's gaze, nevertheless. It was two tiny children's shoes, coquettish in shape and unequal in size. The traveller recalled the graceful and immemorial custom in accordance with which children place their shoes in the chimney on Christmas eve, there to await in the darkness some sparkling gift from their good fairy. Éponine and Azelma had taken care not to omit this, and each of them had set one of her shoes on the hearth.

The traveller bent over them.

The fairy, that is to say, their mother, had already paid her visit, and in each he saw a brand-new and shining ten-sou piece.

The man straightened himself up, and was on the point of withdrawing, when far in, in the darkest corner of the hearth, he caught sight of another object. He looked at it, and recognized a wooden shoe, a frightful shoe of the coarsest description, half dilapidated and all covered with ashes and dried mud. It was Cosette's sabot. Cosette, with that touching trust of childhood, which can always be deceived yet never discouraged, had placed her shoe on the hearth-stone also.

Hope in a child who has never known anything but despair is a sweet and touching thing.

There was nothing in this wooden shoe.

The stranger fumbled in his waistcoat, bent over and placed a louis d'or in Cosette's shoe.

Then he regained his own chamber with the stealthy tread of a wolf.

VICTOR HUGO in *Les Miserables*

Saint Brandan

SAINT BRANDAN sails the northern main;
The brotherhoods of saints are glad.
He greets them once, he sails again;
So late! such storms! The saint is mad!

He heard, across the howling seas,
Chime convent-bells on wintry nights;
He saw, on spray-swept Hebrides,
Twinkle the monastery-lights;

But north, still north, Saint Brandan steered;
And now no bells, no convents more!
The hurtling Polar lights are neared,
The sea without a human shore.

At last (it was the Christmas-night;
Stars shone after a day of storm)
He sees float past an iceberg white,
And on it — Christ! — a living form.

That furtive mien, that scowling eye,
Of hair that red and tufted fell,
It is — oh, where shall Brandan fly? —
The traitor Judas, out of hell!

Palsied with terror, Brandan sate;
The moon was bright, the iceberg near.
He hears a voice sigh humbly, "Wait!
By high permission I am here.

"One moment wait, thou holy man!
On earth my crime, my death, they knew;
My name is under all men's ban:
Ah! tell them of my respite too.

"Tell them, one blessed Christmas-night
(It was the first after I came,
Breathing self-murder, frenzy, spite,
To rue my guilt in endless flame), —

"I felt, as I in torment lay
'Mid the souls plagued by heavenly power,
An angel touch mine arm, and say, —
'Go hence, and cool thyself an hour!'

"'Ah! whence this mercy, Lord?' I said.
'The leper recollect,' said he,
'Who asked the passers-by for aid,
In Joppa, and thy charity.'

"Then I remembered how I went,
In Joppa, through the public street,
One morn when the sirocco spent
Its storms of dust with burning heat;

"And in the street a leper sate,
Shivering with fever, naked, old;
Sand raked his sores from heel to pate,
The hot wind fevered him fivefold.

"He gazed upon me as I passed,
And murmured, 'Help me, or I die!'

To the poor wretch my cloak I cast,
Saw him look eased, and hurried by.

* * * *

"Once every year, when carols wake,
On earth, the Christmas-night's repose,
Arising from the sinner's lake,
I journey to these healing snows.

"I stanch with ice my burning breast,
With silence balm my whirling brain.
O Brandan! to this hour of rest,
That Joppan leper's ease was pain."

Tears started to Saint Brandan's eyes;
He bowed his head, he breathed a prayer,
Then looked — and lo, the frosty skies!
The iceberg, and no Judas there!

MATTHEW ARNOLD

St. Stephen's, or Boxing Day

IN old England St. Stephen's Day is chiefly celebrated under the name of Boxing Day,— not for pugilistic reasons, but because on that day it was the custom for persons in the humbler walks of life to go the rounds with a Christmas-box and solicit money from patrons and employers. Hence the phrase Christmas-box came to signify gifts made at this season to children or inferiors, even after the boxes themselves had gone out of use. This custom was of heathen origin and carries us back to the Roman Paganalia when earthen boxes in which money

was slipped through a hole were hung up to receive contributions at these rural festivals.

Aubrey in his "Wiltshire Collections" describes a *trouvaille* of Roman relics: "Among the rest was an earthen pot of the color of a crucible, and of the shape of a Prentice's Christmas-box with a slit in it, containing about a quart which was near full of money. This pot I gave to the Repository of the Royal Society at Gresham College."

Of the Prentice's Christmas-box, a recognized institution of the seventeenth century, several specimens are preserved, — small and wide bottles of thin clay from three to four inches in height, surrounded by imitation stoppers covered with a green baize. On one side is a slit for the introduction of money; the box must be broken before the money can be extracted.

W. P. R.

St. Basil in Trikkola

TRIKKOLA is very Turkish, having only been in Greek hands for eight years; but though you see mosques and latticed windows at every turn, there is not a Greek left; when his rule is over the Mussulman packs his luggage; he will not live subject to the infidel. It is very squalid indeed, and down the bazaar ran an open drain; but nevertheless the walk by the river is pretty and towards evening women came down to the stream to wash and fetch home water in quaint round bottles. I think one of the most marked distinctions between Turk and Greek is whitewash. Greeks love whitewash; houses, churches, public buildings are excessively clean outside, and promise what

the interior fails to fulfill. This is especially remarkable at Trikkola, where the brown mud houses of Turkish days are being rapidly converted into white Greek ones.

St. Basil's Eve — that is to say the Greek New Year's Eve — is a very marked day in the period of the twelve days, and one on which all make merry. The squalid streets of Trikkola even looked bright as bands of gaily dressed children, nay, even grown-up young men, went round singing the Kalends songs — Greek Kalends that is to say, which though it is twelve days later than ours came at last. And on this the eve of the Kalends these bands paraded the streets, each carrying a long pole to the top of which was tied a piece of brushwood, within which was concealed a bell, and to which were tied many scraps of colored ribbon. At each house the singers stopped. The inhabitants came out to greet them and offer them refreshments, — figs, nuts, eggs and other food, — which were stowed away by one of the band who carried a basket. Their songs to our ears were exceedingly ugly, long chanted stories. I asked a priest whose acquaintance I had made to copy down one of them, of which the following is a rough translation: —

> From Cæsarea came the holy Basil;
> Ink and paper in his hands he held.
> Cried the crowd who saw him coming,
> "Teach us letters, dear St. Basil."
> His rod he left them for instruction —
> His rod which buds with verdant leaves,
> On which the partridges sit singing
> And the swallows make their nests.

Jangle went the bell in the brushwood — "the thicket" as they call it — and out came the housewife when the singing was over, her hands full of homely gifts, in return

for which she was presented with one of the silk ribbons from the trophy. This she will keep for the whole of the ensuing year, for it will bring her good luck. And after many good wishes for the coming year the troupe moved on to another house. . . . It seems that this is the most favorite Greek method of celebrating a festive season. The people in no way resent these constant visitors and claims on their hospitality; nay, rather they would be deeply hurt if the bands of children passed them by.

J. Theodore Bent

III

CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS AND BELIEFS

CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS AND BELIEFS

The Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ
Folk-lore of Christmas Tide
Hunting the Wren
The Presepio
Hodening in Kent
Origin of the Christmas Tree
Origin of the Christmas Card
The Yule Clog
Come bring with a Noise
Shoe or Stocking
Jule-Nissen
"Lame Needles" in Eubœa
"Who Rides behind the Bells?"
Guests at Yule


VIOLET WHARTON EDWARDS 09

SOME sayes, that ever 'gainst that Season comes
Wherein our Saviours Birth is celebrated,
The Bird of Dawning singeth all night long:
And then (they say) no Spirit can walke abroad,
The nights are wholesome, then no Planets strike,
No Faiery talkes, nor Witch hath power to Charme:
So hallowed, and so gracious is the time.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

The Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ

WHEN the world had endured five thousand and nine hundred years, after Eusebius the holy saint, Octavian the Emperor commanded that all the world should be described, so that he might know how many cities, how many towns, and how many persons he had in all the universal world. Then was so great peace in the earth that all the world was obedient to him. And therefore our Lord would be born in that time, that it should be known that be brought peace from heaven. And this Emperor commanded that every man should go into the towns, cities or villages from whence they were of, and should bring with him a penny in acknowledgment that he was subject to the Empire of Rome. And by so many pence as should be found received, should be known the number of the persons. Joseph, which was then of the lineage of David, and dwelleth in Nazareth, went into the city of Bethlehem, and led with him the Virgin Mary his wife. And when they were come thither, because the hostelries were all taken up, they were constrained to be without in a common place where all people went. And there was a stable for an ass that he brought with him, and for an ox. In that night our Blessed Lady and Mother of God was delivered of our Blessed Saviour upon the hay that lay in the rack. At which nativity our Lord shewed many marvels. For because that the world was in so great peace, the Romans had done made a temple which was named the Temple of Peace, in which they counselled with Apollo to know how long it should stand and endure. Apollo answered

to them, that it should stand as long till a maid had brought forth and borne a child. And therefore they did do write on the portal of the Temple: Lo! this is the temple of peace that ever shall endure. For they supposed well that a maid might never bear ne bring forth a child. This temple that same time that our Lady was delivered and our Lord born, overthrew and fell all down. Of which christian men afterward made in the same place a church of our Lady which is called Sancta Maria Rotunda, that is to say, the Church of Saint Mary the Round. Also the same night, as recordeth Innocent the third, which was Pope, there sprang and sourded in Rome a well or a fountain, and ran largely all that night and all that day unto the river of Rome called Tiber. Also after that, recordeth S. John Chrysostom, the three kings were in this night in their orisons and prayers upon a mountain, when a star appeared by them which had the form of a right fair child, which had a cross in his forehead, which said to these three kings that they should go to Jersualem, and there they should find the son of the Virgin, God and Man, which then was born. Also there appeared in the orient three suns, which little and little assembled together, and were all on one. As it is signified to us that these three things are the Godhead, the soul, and the body, which been in three natures assembled in one person. Also Octavian the Emperor, like as Innocent recordeth, that he was much desired of his council and of his people, that he should do men worship him as God. For never had there been before him so great a master and lord of the world as he was. Then the Emperor sent for a prophetess named Sibyl, for to demand of her if there were any so great and like him in the earth, or if any should come after him.

Thus at the hour of mid-day she beheld the heaven, and saw a circle of gold about the sun, and in the middle of the circle a maid holding a child in her arms. Then she called the Emperor and shewed it him. When Octavian saw that he marvelled over much, whereof Sibyl said to him: Hic puer major te est, ipsum adora. This child is greater lord than thou art, worship him. Then when the Emperor understood that this child was greater lord than he was, he would not be worshipped as God, but worshipped this child that should be born. Wherefore the christian men made a church of the same chamber of the Emperor, and named it Ara cœli. After this it happed on a night as a great master which is of great authority in Scripture, which is named Bartholemew, recordeth that the Rod of Engadi which is by Jerusalem, which beareth balm, flowered this night and bare fruit, and gave liquor of balm. After this came the angel and appeared to the shepherds that kept their sheep, and said to them: I announce and shew to you a great joy, for the Saviour of the world is in this night born, in the city of Bethlehem, there may ye find him wrapt in clouts. And anon, as the angel had said this, a great multitude of angels appeared with him, and began to sing: Honour, glory and health be to God on high, and in the earth peace to men of goodwill. Then said the shepherds, let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing. And when they came they found like as the angel had said. In this time Octavian made to cut and enlarge the ways and quitted the Romans of all the debts that they owed to him. This feast of Nativity of our Lord is one of the greatest feasts of all the year, and for to tell all the miracles that our Lord hath shewed, it should contain a whole book; but at this time I shall leave and pass over

save one thing that I have heard once preached of a worshipful doctor, that what person being in clean life desire on this day a boon of God, as far as it is rightful and good for him, our Lord at the reverence of this blessed high feast of his Nativity will grant it to him.

From *The Golden Legend*

Folk-Lore of Christmas Tide

SCOTTISH folk-lore has it that Christ was born "at the hour of midnight on Christmas Eve," and that the miracle of turning water into wine was performed by Him at the same hour. There is a belief current in some parts of Germany that "between eleven and twelve the night before Christmas water turns to wine"; in other districts, as at Bielefeld, it is on Christmas night that this change is thought to take place.

This hour is also auspicious for many actions, and in some sections of Germany it was thought that if one would go to the cross-roads between eleven and twelve on Christmas Day, and listen, he "would hear what most concerns him in the coming year." Another belief is that "if one walks into the winter-corn on Holy Christmas Eve, he will hear all that will happen in the village that year."

Christmas Eve or Christmas is the time when the oracles of the folk are in the best working-order, especially the many processes by which maidens are wont to discover the colour of their lover's hair, the beauty of his face and form, his trade and occupation, whether they shall marry or not, and the like.

The same season is most auspicious for certain ceremonies and practices (transferred to it from the heathen

antiquity) of the peasantry of Europe in relation to agriculture and allied industries. Among those noted by Grimm are the following: —

On Christmas Eve thrash the garden with a flail, with only your shirt on, and the grass will grow well next year.

Tie wet strawbands around the orchard trees on Christmas Eve and it will make them fruitful.

On Christmas Eve put a stone on every tree, and they will bear the more.

Beat the trees on Christmas night, and they will bear more fruit.

In Herefordshire, Devonshire, and Cornwall, in England, the farmers and peasantry "salute the apple-trees on Christmas Eve," and in Sussex they used to "worsle," *i.e.* "wassail," the apple-trees and chant verses to them in somewhat of the primitive fashion.

Some other curious items of Christmas folk-lore are the following, current chiefly in Germany.

If after a Christmas dinner you shake out the tablecloth over the bare ground under the open sky, crumbwort will grow on the spot.

If on Christmas Day, or Christmas Eve, you hang a wash-clout on a hedge, and then groom the horses with it, they will grow fat.

As often as the cock crows on Christmas Eve, the quarter of corn will be as dear.

If a dog howls the night before Christmas, it will go mad within the year.

If the light is let go out on Christmas Eve, some one in the house will die.

When lights are brought in on Christmas Eve, if any one's

shadow has no head, he will die within a year; if half a head, in the second half-year.

If a hoop comes off a cask on Christmas Eve, some one in the house will die that year.

If on Christmas Eve you make a little heap of salt on the table, and it melts over night, you will die the next year; if, in the morning, it remain undiminished, you will live.

If you wear something sewed with thread spun on Christmas Eve, no vermin will stick to you.

If a shirt be spun, woven, and sewed by a pure, chaste maiden on Christmas Day, it will be proof against lead or steel.

If you are born at sermon-time on Christmas morning, you can see spirits.

If you burn elder on Christmas Eve, you will have revealed to you all the witches and sorcerers of the neighbourhood.

If you steal hay the night before Christmas, and give the cattle some, they thrive, and you are not caught in any future thefts.

If you steal anything at Christmas without being caught, you can steal safely for a year.

If you eat no beans on Christmas Eve, you will become an ass.

If you eat a raw egg, fasting, on Christmas morning, you can carry heavy weights.

The crumbs saved up on three Christmas Eves are good to give as physic to one who is disappointed.

It is unlucky to carry anything forth from the house on Christmas morning until something has been brought in.

It is unlucky to give a neighbour a live coal to kindle a fire with on Christmas morning.

If the fire burns brightly on Christmas morning, it betokens prosperity during the year; if it smoulders, adversity.

These, and many other practices, ceremonies, beliefs, and superstitions, which may be read in Grimm, Gregor, Henderson, De Gubernatis, Ortwein, Tilte, and others who have written of Christmas, show the importance attached in the folk-mind to the time of the birth of Christ, and how around it as a centre have fixed themselves hundreds of the rites and solemnities of passing heathendom, with its recognition of the kinship of all nature, out of which grew astrology, magic, and other pseudo-sciences.

Collected by A. F. CHAMBERLAIN

CHRISTMAS succeeds the Saturnalia, the same time, the same number of Holy-days; then the Master waited upon the Servant like the Lord of Misrule.

Our Meats and our Sports, much of them, have Relation to Church-works. The Coffin of our Christmas-Pies, in shape long, is in Imitation of the Cratch; our choosing Kings and Queens on Twelfth-Night, hath reference to the three Kings. So likewise our eating of Fritters, whipping of Tops, roasting of Herrings, Jack of Lents, etc., they were all in imitation of Church-works, Emblems of Martyrdom. *The Table-Talk of John Selden*

Hunting the Wren

THE custom, which is called "hunting the wren," is generally practised by the peasantry of the south of Ireland on St. Stephen's Day. It bears a close resemblance to the Manx proceedings described by Waldron, — as

taking place however on a different day. "On the 24th of December," says that writer, in his account of the Isle of Man, "towards evening the servants in general have a holiday; they go not to bed all night, but ramble about till the bells ring in all the churches, which is at twelve o'clock. Prayers being over, they go to hunt the wren; and after having found one of these poor birds, they kill her and lay her on a bier with the utmost solemnity, bringing her to the parish church and burying her with a whimsical kind of solemnity, singing dirges over her in the Manx language, which they call her knell; after which Christmas begins."

The Wren-boys in Ireland, who are also called Droleens, go from house to house for the purpose of levying contributions, carrying one or more of these birds in the midst of a bush of holly, gaily decorated with colored ribbons; which birds they have, like the Manx mummers, employed their morning in killing. The following is their song; of which they deliver themselves in most monotonous music:—

"The wren, the wren, the king of all birds,
St. Stephen's-day was caught in the furze,
Although he is little, his family's great.
I pray you, good landlady, give us a treat.

"My box would speak, if it had but a tongue,
And two or three shillings would do it no wrong;
Sing holly, sing ivy — sing ivy, sing holly,
A drop just to drink, it would drown melancholy.

"And if you draw it of the best,
I hope, in heaven your soul will rest;
But if you draw it of the small,
It won't agree with these Wren-boys at all."

If an immediate acknowledgment, either in money or drink, is not made in return for the civility of their visit, some such nonsensical verses as the following are added: —

"Last Christmas-day, I turned the spit,
I burned my fingers (I feel it yet),
A cock sparrow flew over the table,
The dish began to fight with the ladle.

"The spit got up like a naked man,
And swore he'd fight with the dripping pan;
The pan got up and cocked his tail,
And swore he'd send them all to jail."

The story told to account for the title of "king of all birds," here given to the wren, is a curious sample of Irish ingenuity, and is thus stated in the clever "Tales of the Munster Festivals," by an Irish servant in answer to his master's inquiry: —

"Saint Stephen! why, what the mischief, I ask you again, have I to do with Saint Stephen?"

"Nothen, sure, sir, only this being his day, when all the boys o' the place go about that way with the wran, the king of all birds, sir, as they say (bekays wanst when all the birds wanted to choose a king, and they said they'd have the bird that would fly highest, the aigle flew higher than any of 'em, till at last when he couldn't fly an inch higher, a little rogue of a wran that was a-hide under his wing took a fly above him a piece, and was crowned king, of the aigle an' all, sir), tied in the middle o' the holly that way you see, sir, by the leg, that is. An old custom, sir."

Vainly have we endeavored to arrive at the probable origin of hunting and killing these little birds upon this day. The tradition commonly related is by no means satisfactory. It is said that a Danish army would have

been surprised and destroyed by some Irish troops, had not a wren given the alarm by pecking at some crumbs upon a drum-head, — the remains of the sleeping drummer's supper; which roused him, when he instantly beat to arms. And that from this circumstance the wren became an object of hatred to the Irish.

T. K. Hervey

The Presepio

AFTER Christmas Day, during the remainder of December, there is a Presepio, or representation of the manger in which our Savior was laid, to be seen in many of the churches at Rome. That of the Ara Cœli is best worth seeing; which church occupies the site of the temple of Jupiter, and is adorned with some of its beautiful pillars.

On entering we found daylight completely excluded from the church; and until we advanced we did not perceive the artificial light, which was so managed as to stream in fluctuating rays from intervening silvery clouds, and shed a radiance over the lovely babe and bending mother, who in a most graceful attitude lightly holds up the drapery which half conceals her sleeping infant from the bystanders. He lies in richly embroidered swaddling clothes, and his person as well as that of His virgin mother, is ornamented with diamonds and other precious stones; for which purpose we are informed the princesses and ladies of high rank lend their jewels. Groups of cattle grazing, peasantry engaged in different occupations, and other objects enliven the picturesque scenery; every living creature in the group, with eyes directed towards the Presepio, falls prostrate in adoration.

From Hone's *Year Book*

Hodening in Kent

WHEN I was a lad, about forty-five years since, it was always the custom on Christmas Eve, with the male farm-servants from every farm in our parish, to go round in the evening from house to house with the hodening horse, which consisted of the imitation of a horse's head made of wood, life size, fixed on a stick about the length of a broom handle. The lower jaw of the head was made to open with hinges; a hole was made through the roof of the mouth, then another through the forehead coming out by the throat; pulled through this was passed a cord attached at the lower jaw, which, when pulled by the cord at the throat, caused it to close and open; on the lower jaw large headed hobnails were driven in to form the teeth. The strongest of the lads was selected for the horse; he stooped and made as long a back as he could, supporting himself by the stick carrying the head; then he was covered with a horse-cloth, and one of his companions mounted his back. The horse had a bridle and reins. Then commenced the kicking, rearing, jumping, etc., and the banging together of the teeth.

There was no singing by the accompanying paraders. They simply by ringing or knocking at the houses on their way summoned the inmates to the doors and begged a gratuity. I have seen some of the wooden heads carved out quite hollow in the throat part, and two holes bored through the forehead to form the eyes. The lad who played the horse would hold a lighted candle in the hollow, and you can imagine how horrible it was to any one who opened the door to see such a thing close to his eyes.

A contributor to the *Church Times*, Jan. 23, 1891

Origin of the Christmas Tree

A SCANDINAVIAN myth of great antiquity speaks of a "service tree" sprung from the blood-drenched soil where two lovers had been killed by violence. At certain nights in the Christmas season mysterious lights were seen flaming in its branches, that no wind could extinguish.

One tale describes Martin Luther as attempting to explain to his wife and children the beauty of a snow-covered forest under the glittering star besprinkled sky. Suddenly an idea suggested itself. He went into the garden, cut off a little fir tree, dragged it into the nursery, put some candles on its branches and lighted them.

"It has been explained," says another authority, "as being derived from the ancient Egyptian practice of decking houses at the time of the winter solstice with branches of the date palm — the symbol of life triumphant over death, and therefore of perennial life in the renewal of each bounteous year." The Egyptians regarded the date palm as the emblem not only of immortality, but also of the starlit firmament.

Some of its traditions may have been strongly influenced by the fact that about this time the Jews celebrated their Feast of Chanuckah or Lights, known also as the Feast of Dedication, of which lighted candles are a feature. In Germany, the name for Christmas Eve is Weihnacht, the Night of Dedication, while in Greece at about this season the celebration is called the Feast of Lights.

As a regular institution, however, it can be traced back only to the sixteenth century. During the Middle Ages it suddenly appears in Strassburg; it maintained itself along the Rhine for two hundred years, when suddenly

at the beginning of the nineteenth century the fashion spread all over Germany, and by fifty years later had conquered Christendom.

W. S. WALSH in *Curiosities of Popular Customs* (condensed)

Origin of the Christmas Card

THE Christmas Card is the legitimate descendant of the "school pieces" or "Christmas pieces" which were popular from the beginning to the middle of the nineteenth century. These were sheets of writing-paper sometimes surrounded with those hideous and elaborate pen flourishes forming birds, scrolls, etc., so unnaturally dear to the hearts of writing masters, and sometimes headed with copper-plate engravings, plain or colored. These were used by school boys at the approach of holidays for carefully written letters exploiting the progress they had made in composition and chirography. Charity boys were large purchasers of these pieces, says one writer, and at Christmas time used to take them round their parish to show and at the same time solicit a trifle.

The Christmas Card proper had its tentative origin in 1846. Mr. Joseph Cundall, a London artist, claims to have issued the first in that year. It was printed in lithography, colored by hand, and was of the usual size of a lady's card.

Not until 1862, however, did the custom obtain any foothold. Then experiments were made with cards of the size of an ordinary *carte de visite*, inscribed simply "A Merry Christmas" and "A Happy New Year." After that came to be added robins and holly branches, embossed

figures and landscapes. "I have the original designs before me now," wrote "Luke Limner" (John Leighton) to the London *Publishers' Circular*, Dec. 31, 1883: "they were produced by Goodall & Son. Seeing a growing want and the great sale obtained abroad, this house produced (1868) a Little Red Riding Hood, a Hermit and his Cell, and many other subjects in which snow and the robin played a part."

W. S. Walsh in *Curiosities of Popular Customs*

The Yule Clog

AMID the interior forms to be observed, on this evening, by those who would keep their Christmas after the old orthodox fashion, the first to be noticed is that of the Yule Clog. This huge block, which, in ancient times, and consistently with the capacity of its vast receptacle, was frequently the root of a large tree, it was the practice to introduce into the house with great ceremony, and to the sound of music.

In Drake's "Winter Nights" mention is made of the Yule Clog, as " lying, in ponderous majesty, on the kitchen floor," until "each had sung his Yule song, standing on its centre," — ere it was consigned to the flames that

"Went roaring up the chimney wide."

This Yule Clog, according to Herrick, was to be lighted with the brand of the last year's log, which had been carefully laid aside for the purpose, and music was to be played during the ceremony of lighting.

This log appears to have been considered as sanctifying the roof-tree, and was probably deemed a protection against

those evil spirits over whom this season was in every way a triumph. Accordingly, various superstitions mingled with the prescribed ceremonials in respect of it. From the authority already quoted on this subject, we learn that its virtues were not to be extracted unless it were lighted with clean hands — a direction, probably, including both a useful household hint to the domestics, and, it may be, a moral of a higher kind: —

> "Wash your hands or else the fire
> Will not tend to your desire;
> Unwash'd hands, ye maidens, know,
> Dead the fire though ye blow."

Around this fire, when duly lighted, the hospitalities of the evening were dispensed; and as the flames played about it and above it, with a pleasant song of their own, the song and the tale and the jest went cheerily round.

T. K. Hervey

Come bring with a Noise

COME bring with a noise,
My merry merry boys,
The Christmas log to the firing;
While my good dame, she
Bids ye all be free,
And drink to your heart's desiring.

With the last year's brand
Light the new block, and
For good success in his spending,
On your psaltries play,
That sweet luck may
Come while the log is a tending.

Drink now the strong beer,
Cut the white loaf here,
The while the meat is a shredding,
For the rare mince-pies;
And the plums stand by,
To fill the paste that's a kneading.

ROBERT HERRICK

Shoe or Stocking

IN Holland, children set their shoes,
This night, outside the door;
These wooden shoes Knecht Clobes sees,
And fills them from his store.

But here we hang our stockings up
On handy hook or nail;
And Santa Claus, when all is still,
Will plump them, without fail.

Speak out, you "Sober-sides," speak out,
And let us hear your views;
Between a stocking and a shoe,
What do you see to choose?

One instant pauses Sober-sides,
A little sigh to fetch —
"Well, seems to me a stocking's best,
For wooden shoes won't stretch!"

EDITH M. THOMAS

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Jule-Nissen

I DO not know how the forty years I have been away have dealt with "Jule-nissen," the Christmas elf of my childhood in far-off Denmark. He was pretty old then, gray and bent, and there were signs that his time was nearly over. So it may be that they have laid him away. I shall find out when I go over there next time. When I was a boy we never sat down to our Christmas Eve dinner until a bowl of rice and milk had been taken up to the attic, where he lived with the martin and its young, and kept an eye upon the house — saw that everything ran smoothly. I never met him myself, but I know the house cat must have done so. No doubt they were well acquainted; for when in the morning I went in for the bowl, there it was, quite dry and licked clean, and the cat purring in the corner. So, being there all night, she must have seen and likely talked with him. . . .

The Nisse was of the family, as you see, — very much of it, — and certainly not to be classed with the cattle. Yet they were his special concern; he kept them quiet, saw to it, when the stableman forgot, that they were properly bedded and cleaned and fed. He was very well known to the hands about the farm, and they said that he looked just like a little old man, all in gray and with a pointed red night-cap and long gray beard. He was always civilly treated, as indeed he deserved to be, but Christmas was his great holiday, when he became part of it, indeed, and was made much of. So, for that matter, was everything that lived under the husbandman's roof or within reach of it. Even the sparrows that burrowed in the straw-thatch and did it no good were not forgotten. A sheaf of rye was set

out in the snow for them on the Holy Eve, so that on that night at least they should have shelter and warmth unchallenged, and plenty to eat. At all other times we were permitted to raid their nests and help ourselves to a sparrow roast, which was by long odds the greatest treat we had. Thirty or forty of them, dug out by the light of the stable-lantern and stuffed into Ane's long stocking, which we had borrowed for a game-bag, made a meal for the whole family, each sparrow a fat mouthful. Ane was the cook, and I am very certain that her pot roast of sparrow would pass muster at any Fifth Avenue restaurant as the finest dish of reed-birds that ever was. However, at Christmas their sheaf was their sanctuary, and no one as much as squinted at them. Only last winter, when Christmas found me stranded in a little Michigan town, wandering disconsolate about the streets, I came across such a sheaf raised on a pole in a dooryard, and I knew at once that one of my people lived in that house and kept Yule in the old way. So I felt as if I were not quite a stranger.

Blowing in the Yule from the grim old tower that had stood eight hundred years against the blasts of the North Sea was one of the customs of the old town that abide, however it fares with the Nisse; that I know. At sun-up, while yet the people were at breakfast, the town band climbed the many steep ladders to the top of the tower, and up there, in fair weather or foul — and sometimes it blew great guns from the wintry sea — they played four old hymns, one to each corner of the compass, so that no one was forgotten. They always began with Luther's sturdy challenge, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," while down below we listened devoutly. There was something both weird and beautiful about those far-away strains in



THE BELLS. *Blashfield.*

the early morning light of the northern winter, something that was not of earth and that suggested to my child's imagination the angels' songs on far Judean hills. Even now, after all these years, the memory of it does that. It could not have been because the music was so rare, for the band was made up of small store-keepers and artisans who thus turned an honest penny on festive occasions. Incongruously enough, I think the official town mourner, who bade people to funerals, was one of them. It was like the burghers' guard, the colonel of which — we thought him at least a general, because of the huge brass sword he trailed when he marched at the head of his men — was the town tailor, a very small but very martial man. But whether or no, it was beautiful. I have never heard music since that so moved me. When the last strain died away, came the big bells with their deep voices that sang far out over field and heath, and our Yule was fairly under way.

JACOB RIIS in *The Old Town*

"Lame Needles" in Eubœa

IN the first place, it must be clearly understood that Christmas time to a Greek is by no means considered as festive; in fact they look upon the twelve days which intervene between Christmas and Epiphany rather with abhorrence than otherwise; it is to them the season when ghosts and hobgoblins are supposed to be most rampant; it is generally cold, ungenial weather, and the Greeks of to-day, like their ancestors, live contented only when the warm rays of the life-giving sun scorch them. They can get up no enthusiasm as we can about yule logs and blaz-

ing fires, for they have nothing to warm themselves with save small charcoal braziers capable of communicating heat to not more than one limb at a time; all the festive energies of the race are reserved for Carnival and Eastertide, when the warmth of spring enables them once more to enjoy life out-of-doors — the only one tolerable when you know what their low dirty houses are like. . . .

For a month before Christmas every pious Greek has observed a rigid fast; consequently the "table" which on that day is spread in every house produces something akin to festivity. On a small round table was placed a perfect mountain of maccaroni and cheese — coarse sheep's-milk cheese which stung the mouth like mustard and left a pungent taste which tarried therein for days. There were no plates, no forks, no spoons. What a meal it was indeed, as if it were a contest in gastronomic activity! I was left far behind in the contest, and great was my relief when it was removed and dried fruits and nuts took its place. To drink we had resinated wine — that is to say wine which had been stored in a keg covered with resin inside, which gives the flavor so much relished by the Greeks, but which is almost as unpalatable to an Englishman as beer must be to those who drink it for the first time. The wine, however, had the effect of loosening the tongues of my friends, who had been too busy as yet to talk, and they told me many interesting Christmas tales.

In the first place the conversation turned on certain spirits called "lame needles," which every Eubœan woman of low degree will tell you visit the earth at this season of the year; one lame needle, presumably the leader, comes on Christmas Eve, and the rest of the tribe put in an appearance on Christmas Day. They are dreadful creatures

to look upon, and according to my friends, they live in caves whilst on earth, near which no wise person at this season of the year will venture.

They subsist, like the Amazons of old, on snakes and lizards, and sometimes on women, if they are lucky enough to entrap one.

These demons are only dangerous at night from sunset to cockcrow. When not engaged in dancing the lame needles wander about, and do any amount of mischief. It is their custom to enter houses by the chimney, so every housewife is careful at this season of the year to leave some embers burning all night, for they dread fire and also crosses, and it is for this reason that at Christmas time we see so many whitewash crosses on the cottage doors in Greece. . . . When Epiphany comes these lame needles are forced to flee again underground; but before they go they take a hack at the tree which supports the world, and which one day they will cut through. In appearance these ugly visitors are supposed to be goat-footed goblins, far taller than any man; in fact I should imagine that they are lineal descendants of the satyrs of old still haunting their accustomed purlieus. . . . I will give you a specimen of one of the stories which my friends told me when I slightly threw discredit on the above described apparitions. It is not a very lively one, but will show the character of the Christmas stories which are current in Greece to-day.

"A lame needle once overheard two women settling to get up at night during the season of the twelve days to leaven bread at the house of one of them. Accordingly he knocked at the door of the woman who was going to carry her dough to the other's house and pretended to be a messenger sent to hurry her.

"Fearing nothing, the silly woman set off with her dough accompanied by the uncanny messenger. When they had got a little distance the lame needle turned round and said, 'Stop; I wish to eat you! Whereat the woman recognized who he was, and mindful of the fact that lame needles are very inquisitive, she replied, 'Just wait till I tell you a story.' It was very long and very interesting, so the first cock crew before it was finished. 'It is only the black one; go on; I have yet time,' said the eager lame needle. Then the second cock crew, and he said, 'It is only the red one; I have nought yet to fear.' Just as the woman had reached the most thrilling part of her story the third cock crew, 'It is the white one,' exclaimed the terrified hobgoblin; 'I must be gone.'"

I am sure this story is believed by the peasants of Eubœa.

J. Theodore Bent

Who Rides behind the Bells?

OUR shabby drawing-room was ablaze with red candles; and what with holly red on the walls and the snow banking the casements and bells jingling up and down the avenue, the sense of Christmas was very real. For me, Christmas seems always to be just past or else on the way; and that sixth sense of Christmas being actually *Now* is thrice desirable.

On the stroke of nine we two, waiting before the fire, heard Nichola on the basement stairs; and by the way in which she mounted, with labor and caution, I knew that she was bringing the punch. We had wished to have it ready — that harmless steaming punch compounded from my mother's recipe — when our guests arrived, so that

they should first of all hear the news and drink health to Eunice and Hobart.

Nichola was splendid in her scarlet merino and that vast cap effect managed by a starched pillow-case and a bit of string, and over her arm hung a huge holly wreath for the bowl's brim. When she had deposited her fragrant burden and laid the wreath in place she stood erect and looked at us solemnly for a moment, and then her face wrinkled in all directions and was lighted with her rare puckered smile.

"Mer—ry Christmas!" she said.

"Merry Christmas, Nichola!" we cried, and I think that in all her years with us we had never before heard the words from her lips.

"Who goes ridin' behind the sleigh-bells to-night?" she asked then abruptly.

"*Who* rides?" I repeated, puzzled.

"Yes," Nichola said; "this is a night when all folk stay home. The whole world sits by the fire on Christmas night. An' yet the sleigh-bells ring like mad. It is not holy."

Pelleas and I had never thought of that. But there may be something in it. Who indeed, when all the world keeps hearth-holiday, who is it that rides abroad on Christmas night behind the bells?

"Good spirits, perhaps, Nichola," Pelleas said, smiling.

"I do not doubt it," Nichola declared gravely; "that is not holy either — to doubt."

"No," we said, "to doubt good spirits is never holy."

ZONA GALE in *The Loves of Pelleas and Etarre*

Guests at Yule

NÖEL! Nöel!
Thus sounds each Christmas bell
Across the winter snow.
But what are the little footprints all
That mark the path from the church-yard wall?
These are those of the children waked to-night
From sleep by the Christmas bells and light:
Ring sweetly, chimes! Soft, soft, my rhymes!
Their beds are under the snow.

Nöel! Nöel!
Carols each Christmas bell.
What are the wraiths of mist
That gather anear the window-pane
Where the winter frost all day has lain?
They are soulless elves, who fain would peer
Within, and laugh at our Christmas cheer:
Ring fleetly, chimes! Swift, swift, my rhymes!
They are made of the mocking mist.

Nöel! Nöel!
Cease, cease, each Christmas bell!
Under the holly bough,
Where the happy children throng and shout,
What shadows seem to flit about?
Is it the mother, then, who died,
Ere the greens were sere last Christmastide?
Hush, falling chimes! Cease, cease, my rhymes!
The guests are gathered now.

EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN

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IV

CHRISTMAS CAROLS



CHRISTMAS CAROLS

"I saw Three Ships"
"Lordings, listen to Our Lay"
The Cherry-Tree Carol
"In Excelsis Gloria"
"God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen"
The Golden Carol
Caput apri refero resonens laudes domino
"Villagers All, this Frosty Tide"
Holly Song
"Before the Paling of the Stars"
The Minstrels played their Christmas Tune
A Carol from the Old French
"From Far Away we come to you"
A Christmas Carol
A Christmas Carol for Children


GEORGE·WHARTON·EDWARDS

The First Christmas Carol

FEAR not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger.

Chorus

Glory to God in the highest, and on
earth peace, goodwill toward men.

St. Luke's Gospel

I saw Three Ships

I SAW three ships come sailing in,
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
I saw three ships come sailing in,
On Christmas day in the morning.

And what was in those ships all three,
On Christmas day, on Christmas day?
And what was in those ships all three,
On Christmas day in the morning?

The Virgin Mary and Christ were there,
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
The Virgin Mary and Christ were there,
On Christmas day in the morning.

Pray, whither sailed those ships all three,
On Christmas day, on Christmas day?
Pray, whither sailed those ships all three,
On Christmas day in the morning?

O they sailed into Bethlehem,
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
O they sailed into Bethlehem,
On Christmas day in the morning.

And all the bells on earth shall ring,
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
And all the bells on earth shall ring,
On Christmas day in the morning.

And all the Angels in Heaven shall sing,
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
And all the Angels in Heaven shall sing,
On Christmas day in the morning.

And all the souls on earth shall sing,
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
And all the souls on earth shall sing,
On Christmas day in the morning.

Then let us all rejoice amain,
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
Then let us all rejoice amain,
On Christmas day in the morning.

Old English Carol

Lordings, listen to Our Lay

LORDINGS, listen to our lay —
We have come from far away
To seek Christmas;
In this mansion we are told
He his yearly feast doth hold:
'Tis to day!
May joy come from God above,
To all those who Christmas love.

Lordings, I now tell you true,
Christmas bringeth unto you
Only mirth:

His house he fills with many a dish,
Of bread and meat and also fish,
To grace the day.
May joy come from God above,
To all those who Christmas love.

Lordings, through our army's band
They say — who spends with open hand
Free and fast,
And oft regales his many friends —
God gives him double what he spends,
To grace the day.
May joy come from God above,
To all those who Christmas love.

Lordings, wicked men eschew,
In them never shall you view
Aught that's good;
Cowards are the rabble rout,
Kick and beat the grumblers out,
To grace the day.
May joys come from God above,
To all those who Christmas love.

Lords, by Christmas and the host
Of this mansion hear my toast —
Drink it well —
Each must drain his cup of wine,
And I the first will toss off mine:
Thus I advise,
Here then I bid you all *Wassail,*
Cursed be he who will not say *Drinkhail.*

Earliest Existing Carol; Thirteenth Century

The Cherry-Tree Carol

AS Joseph was a-walking,
He heard an angel sing,
"This night shall be the birth-time
Of Christ, the heavenly King.

"He neither shall be born
In housen nor in hall,
Nor in the place of paradise,
But in an ox's stall.

"He neither shall be clothèd
In purple nor in pall,
But in the fair white linen
That usen babies all.

"He neither shall be rockèd
In silver nor in gold,
But in a wooden manger
That resteth on the mould."

As Joseph was a-walking,
There did an angel sing,
And Mary's child at midnight
Was born to be our King.

Then be ye glad, good people,
This night of all the year,
And light ye up your candles,
For his star it shineth clear.

Old English

In Excelsis Gloria

WHEN Christ was born of Mary free,
In Bethlehem, in that fair citie,
Angels sang there with mirth and glee,
In Excelsis Gloria!

Herdsmen beheld these angels bright,
To them appearing with great light,
Who said, "God's Son is born this night,"
In Excelsis Gloria!

This King is come to save mankind,
As in Scripture truths we find,
Therefore this song have we in mind,
In Excelsis Gloria!

Then, Lord, for thy great grace,
Grant us the bliss to see thy face,
Where we may sing to thy solace,
In Excelsis Gloria!
From the Harleian MSS.

God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen

GOD rest you merry, gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour,
Was born upon this day;
To save us all from Satan's power,
When we were gone astray.

O tidings of comfort and joy,
For Jesus Christ our Saviour
was born on Christmas Day.

In Bethlehem in Jewry
This blessed babe was born,
And laid within a manger
Upon this blessed morn;
The which His mother Mary
Nothing did take in scorn.
O tidings of comfort and joy,—

From God, our Heavenly Father,
A blessed Angel came,
And, unto certain shepherds,
Brought tidings of the same;
How, that in Bethlehem was born
The Son of God by name.
O tidings of comfort and joy,—

* * * * *

The Shepherds at those tidings,
Rejoicèd much in mind,
And left their flocks a-feeding
In tempest, storm, and wind,
And went to Bethlehem straightway,
This blessed Babe to find.
O tidings of comfort and joy,—

But when to Bethlehem they came,
Where as this Infant lay,
They found him in a manger
Where oxen feed on hay,

His mother Mary kneeling
Unto the Lord did pray.
O tidings of comfort and joy,—

Now to the Lord sing praises
All you within this place,
And with true love and brotherhood
Each other now embrace,
This holy tide of Christmas
All others doth deface.
O tidings of comfort and joy,
For Jesus Christ our Saviour
was born on Christmas Day.

Old English

The Golden Carol

(Of Melchior, Balthazar, and Gaspar, the Three Kings of Cologne)

WE saw the light shine out a-far,
On Christmas in the morning,
And straight we knew Christ's Star it was,
Bright beaming in the morning.
Then did we fall on bended knee,
On Christmas in the morning,
And prais'd the Lord, who'd let us see
His glory at its dawning.

Oh! ever thought be of His Name,
On Christmas in the morning,
Who bore for us both grief and shame,
Afflictions sharpest scorning.

And may we die (when death shall come),
On Christmas in the morning,
And see in heav'n, our glorious home,
The Star of Christmas morning.

Old English

Caput apri refero resonens laudes domino

THE boar's head in hands I bring,
With garlands gay and birds singing!
I pray you all help me to sing,
Qui estis in convivio!

The boar's head I understand,
Is chief service in all this land,
Wheresoever it may be found,
Servitur cum sinapio!

The boar's head I dare well say,
Anon after the twelfth day,
He taketh his leave and goeth away!
Exivit tunc de patria!

From a Balliol MS. of about 1540

Villagers All, this Frosty Tide

VILLAGERS all, this frosty tide,
Let your doors swing open wide,
Though wind may follow, and snow beside,
Yet draw us in by your fire to bide;
Joy shall be yours in the morning!

Here we stand in the cold and the sleet,
Blowing fingers and stamping feet,
Come from far away you to greet —
You by the fire and we in the street —
Bidding you joy in the morning!

For ere one half of the night was gone,
Sudden a star has led us on,
Raining bliss and benison —
Bliss to-morrow and more anon,
Joy for every morning.

Goodman Joseph toiled through the snow —
Saw a star o'er a stable low;
Mary she might not further go —
Welcome thatch, and litter below!
Joy was hers in the morning!

And then they heard the angels tell
'Who were the first to cry Nowell?
Animals all, as it befell,
In the stable where they did dwell!
Joy shall be theirs in the morning!'

Quoted in *The Wind in the Willows*, by KENNETH GRAHAME.

By permission of Charles Scribner's Sons

Holly Song

BLOW, blow, thou winter winde,
Thou art not so unkinde,
As mans ingratitude
Thy tooth is not so keene,
Because thou art not seene,
Although thy breath be rude.
Heigh ho, sing heigh ho, unto the greene holly,
Most frendship is fayning; most Loving, meere folly:
Then heigh ho, the holly,
This Life is most jolly.

Freize, freize, thou bitter skie
That dost not bight so nigh
As benefitts forgot:
Though thou the waters warpe,
Thy sting is not so sharpe,
As freind remembred not.
Heigh ho, sing heigh ho, unto the greene holly,
Most frendship is fayning; most Loving, meere folly:
Then heigh ho, the holly,
This Life is most jolly.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Before the Paling of the Stars

BEFORE the paling of the stars,
Before the winter morn,
Before the earliest cockcrow,
Jesus Christ was born:

Born in a stable,
Cradled in a manger,
In the world His hands had made
Born a stranger.

Priest and King lay fast asleep
In Jerusalem,
Young and old lay fast asleep
In crowded Bethlehem:
Saint and Angel, ox and ass,
Kept a watch together
Before the Christmas daybreak
In the winter weather.

Jesus on His Mother's breast
In the stable cold,
Spotless Lamb of God was He,
Shepherd of the fold:
Let us kneel with Mary Maid,
With Joseph bent and hoary,
With Saint and Angel, ox and ass,
To hail the King of Glory.

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

"The Minstrels played their Christmas Tune"

THE minstrels played their Christmas tune
To-night beneath my cottage eaves;
While, smitten by a lofty moon,
The encircling laurels, thick with leaves,
Gave back a rich and dazzling sheen,
That overpowered their natural green.

Through hill and valley every breeze
 Had sunk to rest with folded wings:
Keen was the air, but could not freeze,
 Nor check the music of the strings;
So stout and hardy were the band
That scraped the chords with strenuous hand.

And who but listened? — till was paid
 Respect to every inmate's claim:
The greeting given, the music played,
 In honour of each household name,
Duly pronounced with lusty call,
And "merry Christmas" wished to all!

* * * * *

For pleasure hath not ceased to wait
 On these expected annual rounds;
Whether the rich man's sumptuous gate
 Call forth the unelaborate sounds,
Or they are offered at the door
That guards the lowliest of the poor.

How touching, when, at midnight, sweep
 Snow-muffled winds, and all is dark,
To hear — and sink again to sleep!
 Or, at an earlier call, to mark,
By blazing fire, the still suspense
Of self-complacent innocence.

The mutual nod, — the grave disguise
 Of hearts with gladness brimming o'er;
And some unbidden tears that rise
 For names once heard, and heard no more;

Tears brightened by the serenade
For infant in the cradle laid.

* * * * *

Hail, ancient Manners! sure defence,
Where they survive, of wholesome laws;
Remnants of love whose modest sense
Thus into narrow room withdraws;
Hail, Usages of pristine mould,
And ye that guard them, Mountains old!

* * * * *

Yes, they can make, who fail to find
Short leisure even in busiest days,
Moments, to cast a look behind,
And profit by those kindly rays
That through the clouds do sometimes steal,
And all the far-off past reveal.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

A Carol from the Old French

I HEAR along our street
Pass the minstrel throngs;
Hark! they play so sweet,
On their hautboys, Christmas songs!
Let us by the fire
Ever higher
Sing them till the night expire!

In December ring
Every day the chimes;
Loud the gleemen sing
In the street their merry rhymes.

Let us by the fire
Ever higher
Sing them till the night expire!

Shepherds at the grange,
Where the Babe was born,
Sang, with many a change,
Christmas carols until morn.
Let us by the fire
Ever higher
Sing them till the night expire!

These good people sang
Songs devout and sweet;
While the rafters rang,
There they stood with freezing feet.
Let us by the fire
Ever higher
Sing them till the night expire!

* * * *

Who by the fireside stands
Stamps his feet and sings;
But he who blows his hands
Not so gay a carol brings.
Let us by the fire
Ever higher
Sing them till the night expire!

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW
A Paraphrase from the Old French



THE MADONNA. *Giovanni Bellini.*

From Far Away

FROM far away we come to you.
The snow in the street, and the wind on the door,
To tell of great tidings, strange and true.
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.
From far away we come to you,
To tell of great tidings, strange and true.

For as we wandered far and wide,
The snow in the street, and the wind on the door,
What hap do you deem there should us betide?
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

Under a bent when the night was deep,
The snow in the street, and the wind on the door.
There lay three shepherds, tending their sheep.
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

"O ye shepherds, what have ye seen,
The snow in the street, and the wind on the door,
To stay your sorrow and heal your teen?"
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

"In an ox stall this night we saw,
The snow in the street, and the wind on the door,
A Babe and a maid without a flaw.
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

"There was an old man there beside;
The snow in the street, and the wind on the door,
His hair was white, and his hood was wide.
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

"And as we gazed this thing upon,
The snow in the street, and the wind on the door,
Those twain knelt down to the little one.
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

"And a marvellous song we straight did hear,
The snow in the street, and the wind on the door,
That slew our sorrow and healed our care."
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

News of a fair and a marvellous thing,
The snow in the street, and the wind on the door,
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, we sing.
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

Old English Carol

A Christmas Carol

"WHAT means this glory round our feet,"
The Magi mused, "more bright than morn?"
And voices chanted clear and sweet,
"To-day the Prince of Peace is born!"

"What means that star," the Shepherds said,
"That brightens through the rocky glen?"
And angels, answering overhead,
Sang, "Peace on earth, good-will to men!"

'Tis eighteen hundred years and more
Since those sweet oracles were dumb;
We wait for Him, like them of yore;
Alas, He seems so slow to come!

But it was said, in words of gold,
No time or sorrow e'er shall dim,
That little children might be bold
In perfect trust to come to Him.

All round about our feet shall shine
A light like that the wise men saw,
If we our loving wills incline
To that sweet Life which is the Law.

So shall we learn to understand
The simple faith of shepherds then,
And, clasping kindly hand in hand,
Sing, "Peace on earth, good-will to men!"

But they who do their souls no wrong,
But keep at eve the faith of morn,
Shall daily hear the angel-song,
"To-day the Prince of Peace is born!"

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

A Christmas Carol for Children

GOOD news from heaven the angels bring,
Glad tidings to the earth they sing:
To us this day a child is given,
To crown us with the joy of heaven.

This is the Christ, our God and Lord,
Who in all need shall aid afford:
He will Himself our Saviour be,
From sin and sorrow set us free.

To us that blessedness He brings,
Which from the Father's bounty springs:
That in the heavenly realm we may
With Him enjoy eternal day.

All hail, Thou noble Guest, this morn,
Whose love did not the sinner scorn!
In my distress Thou cam'st to me:
What thanks shall I return to Thee?

Were earth a thousand times as fair,
Beset with gold and jewels rare,
She yet were far too poor to be
A narrow cradle, Lord, for Thee.

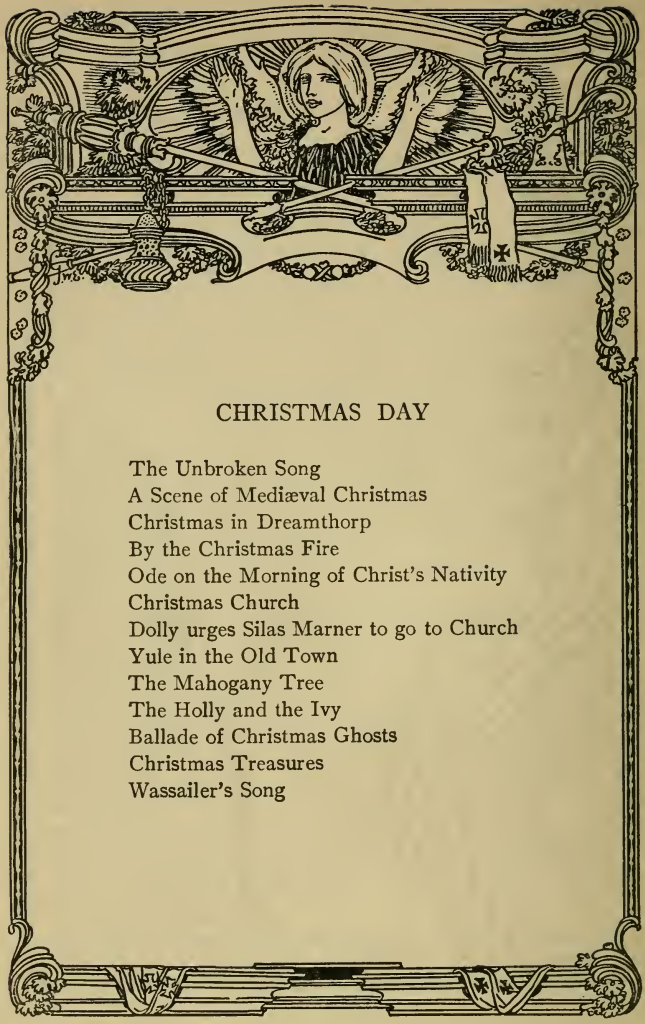
Ah, dearest Jesus, Holy Child!
Make Thee a bed, soft, undefiled,
Within my heart, that it may be
A quiet chamber kept for Thee.

Praise God upon His heavenly throne,
Who gave to us His only Son:
For this His hosts, on joyful wing,
A blest New Year of mercy sing.

MARTIN LUTHER

V

CHRISTMAS DAY



CHRISTMAS DAY

The Unbroken Song
A Scene of Mediæval Christmas
Christmas in Dreamthorp
By the Christmas Fire
Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity
Christmas Church
Dolly urges Silas Marner to go to Church
Yule in the Old Town
The Mahogany Tree
The Holly and the Ivy
Ballade of Christmas Ghosts
Christmas Treasures
Wassailer's Song


GEORGE WILLIAM EDWARDS

The Unbroken Song

I HEARD the bells on Christmas Day,
Their old, familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along
The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

A Scene of Mediæval Christmas

LET us imagine Christmas Day in a mediæval town of Northern England. The cathedral is only partly finished. Its nave and transepts are the work of Norman architects, but the choir has been destroyed in order to be rebuilt by more graceful designers and more skillful hands. The old city is full of craftsmen assembled to complete the church. Some have come, as a religious duty, to work off their tale of sins by bodily labor. Some are animated by a love of art — simple men who might have rivalled with the Greeks in ages of more cultivation. Others, again, are well-known carvers brought for hire from distant towns and countries beyond the sea. But to-day, and for some days past, the sound of hammer and chisel has been silent in the choir. Monks have bustled about the nave, dressing it up with holly boughs and bushes of yew, and preparing a stage for the sacred play they are going to exhibit on the feast-day. Christmas is not like Corpus Christi, and now the market-place stands inches deep in snow, so that the Miracles must be enacted beneath a roof instead of in the open air. And what place so appropriate as the cathedral, where poor people may have warmth and shelter while they see the show? Besides, the gloomy old church, with its windows darkened by the falling snow, lends itself to candle-light effects that will enhance the splendor of the scene. Everything is ready. The incense of morning mass yet lingers round the altar. The voice of the friar, who told the people from the pulpit the story of Christ's birth, has hardly ceased to echo. Time has just been given for a mid-day dinner, and for the shepherds and

farm lads to troop in from the countryside. The monks are ready at the wooden stage to draw its curtain, and all the nave is full of eager faces. There you may see the smith and carpenter, the butcher's wife, the country priest, and the gray-cowled friar. Scores of workmen, whose home the cathedral for the time is made, are also here, and you may know the artists by their thoughtful foreheads and keen eyes. That young monk carved Madonna and her Son above the southern porch. Beside him stands the master-mason, whose strong arms have hewn gigantic images of prophets and apostles for the pinnacles outside the choir; and the little man with cunning eyes between the two is he who cuts such quaint hobgoblins for the gargoyles. He has a vein of satire in him, and his humor overflows into the stone. Many and many a grim beast and hideous head has he hidden among vine-leaves and trellis-work upon the porches. Those who know him well are loath to anger him, for fear their sons and sons' sons should laugh at them forever caricatured in solid stone.

Hark! there sounds the bell. The curtain is drawn, and the candles blaze brightly round the wooden stage. What is this first scene? We have God in Heaven, dressed like a pope with triple crown, and attended by his court of angels. They sing and toss up censers till he lifts his hand and speaks. In a long Latin speech he unfolds the order of creation and his will concerning man. At the end of it up leaps an ugly buffoon, in goatskin, with rams' horns upon his head. Some children begin to cry; but the older people laugh, for this is the Devil, the clown and comic character, who talks their common tongue, and has no reverence before the very throne of Heaven. He asks

leave to plague men, and receives it; then, with many a curious caper, he goes down to Hell, beneath the stage. The angels sing and toss their censers as before, and the first scene closes to a sound of organs. The next is more conventional, in spite of some grotesque incidents. It represents the Fall; the monks hurry over it quickly, as a tedious but necessary prelude to the birth of Christ. That is the true Christmas part of the ceremony, and it is understood that the best actors and most beautiful dresses are to be reserved for it. The builders of the choir in particular are interested in the coming scenes, since one of their number has been chosen, for his handsome face and tenor voice, to sing the angel's part. He is a young fellow of nineteen, but his beard is not yet grown, and long hair hangs down upon his shoulders. A chorister of the cathedral, his younger brother, will act the Virgin Mary. At last the curtain is drawn.

We see a cottage room, dimly lighted by a lamp, and Mary spinning near her bedside. She sings a country air, and goes on working, till a rustling noise is heard, more light is thrown upon the stage, and a glorious creature, in white raiment, with broad golden wings, appears. He bears a lily, and cries, "Ave Maria, Gratia Plena!" She does not answer, but stands confused, with down-dropped eyes and timid mien. Gabriel rises from the ground and comforts her, and sings aloud his message of glad tidings. Then Mary gathers courage, and, kneeling in her turn, thanks God; and when the angel and his radiance disappears, she sings the song of the Magnificat, clearly and simply, in the darkened room. Very soft and silver sounds this hymn through the great church. The women kneel, and children are hushed as by a lullaby. But some of

the hinds and 'prentice-lads begin to think it rather dull. They are not sorry when the next scene opens with a sheep-fold and a little camp-fire. Unmistakable bleatings issue from the fold, and five or six common fellows are sitting round the blazing wood. One might fancy they had stepped straight from the church floor to the stage, so natural do they look. Besides, they call themselves by common names — Colin and Tom Lie-a-bed and Nimble Dick. Many a round laugh wakes echoes in the church when these shepherds stand up, and hold debate about a stolen sheep. Tom Lie-a-bed has nothing to remark but that he is very sleepy, and does not want to go in search of it to-night; Colin cuts jokes, and throws out shrewd suspicions that Dick knows something of the matter; but Dick is sly, and keeps them off the scent, although a few of his asides reveal to the audience that he is the real thief. While they are thus talking, silence falls upon the shepherds. Soft music from the church organ breathes, and they appear to fall asleep.

The stage is now quite dark, and for a few moments the aisles echo only to the dying melody. When, behold, a ray of light is seen, and splendor grows around the stage from hidden candles, and in the glory Gabriel appears upon a higher platform made to look like clouds. The shepherds wake in confusion, striving to shelter their eyes from this unwonted brilliancy. But Gabriel waves his lily, spreads his great gold wings, and bids good cheer with clarion voice. The shepherds fall to worship, and suddenly round Gabriel there gathers a choir of angels, and a song of "Gloria in Excelsis" to the sound of a deep organ is heard far off. From distant aisles it swells, and seems to come from heaven. Through a long resonant fugue the

glory flies, and as it ceases with complex conclusion, the lights die out, the angels disappear, and Gabriel fades into the darkness. Still the shepherds kneel, rustically chanting a carol half in Latin, half in English, which begins "In dulci Jubilo." The people know it well, and when the chorus rises with "Ubi sunt gaudia?" its wild melody is caught by voices up and down the nave. This scene makes deep impression upon many hearts; for the beauty of Gabriel is rare, and few who see him in his angel's dress would know him for the lad who daily carves his lilies and broad water-flags about the pillars of the choir. To that simple audience he interprets Heaven, and little children will see him in their dreams. Dark winter nights and awful forests will be trodden by his feet, made musical by his melodious voice, and parted by the rustling of his wings. The youth himself may return to-morrow to the workman's blouse and chisel, but his memory lives in many minds and may form a part of Christmas for the fancy of men as yet unborn.

The next drawing of the curtain shows us the stable of Bethlehem crowned by its star. There kneels Mary, and Joseph leans upon his staff. The ox and the ass are close at hand, and Jesus lies in jeweled robes on straw within the manger. To right and left bow the shepherds, worshiping in dumb show, while voices from behind chant a solemn hymn. In the midst of the melody is heard the flourish of trumpets, and heralds step upon the stage, followed by the three crowned kings. They have come from the far East, led by the star. The song ceases, while drums and fifes and trumpets play a stately march. The kings pass by, and do obeisance one by one. Each gives some costly gift; each doffs his crown and leaves it at the

Saviour's feet. Then they retire to a distance and worship in silence like the shepherds. Again the angels' song is heard, and while it dies away the curtain closes and the lights are put out.

The play is over, and the evening has come. The people must go from the warm church into the frozen snow, and crunch their homeward way beneath the moon. But in their minds they carry a sense of light and music and unearthly loveliness. Not a scene of this day's pageant will be lost. It grows within them and creates the poetry of Christmas. Nor must we forget the sculptors who listen to the play. We spoke of them minutely, because these mysteries sank deep into their souls and found a way into their carvings on the cathedral walls. The monk who made Madonna by the southern porch will remember Gabriel and place him bending low in lordly salutation by her side. The painted glass of the chapter-house will glow with fiery choirs of angels learned by heart that night. And who does not know the mocking devils and quaint satyrs that the humorous sculptor carved among his fruits and flowers? Some of the misereres of the stalls still bear portraits of the shepherd thief, and of the ox and ass who blinked so blindly when the kings, by torchlight, brought their dazzling gifts. Truly these old miracle-plays and the carved work of cunning hands that they inspired are worth to us more than all the delicate creations of Italian pencils. Our homely Northern churches still retain, for the child who reads their bosses and their sculptured fronts, more Christmas poetry than we can find in Fra Angelico's devoutness or the liveliness of Giotto. Not that Southern artists have done nothing for our Christmas. Cimabue's gigantic angels at Assisi, and the radiant seraphs of Raphael

or of Signorelli, were seen by Milton in his Italian journey. He gazed in Romish churches on graceful Nativities, into which Angelico and Credi threw their simple souls. How much they tinged his fancy we cannot say. But what we know of heavenly hierarchies we later men have learned from Milton; and what he saw he spoke, and what he spoke in sounding verse lives for us now and sways our reason, and controls our fancy, and makes fine art of high theology.

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

Christmas in Dreamthorp

THIS, then, is Christmas. Everything is silent in Dreamthorp. The smith's hammer reposes beside the anvil. The weaver's flying shuttle is at rest. Through the clear, wintry sunshine the bells this morning rang from the gray church tower amid the leafless elms, and up the walk the villagers trooped in their best dresses and their best faces — the latter a little reddened by the sharp wind: mere redness in the middle aged; in the maids wonderful bloom to the eyes of their lovers — and took their places decently in the ancient pews. The clerk read the beautiful prayers of our Church, which seem so much more beautiful at Christmas than at any other period. For that very feeling which breaks down at this time the barriers which custom, birth, or wealth have erected between man and man, strikes down the barrier of time which intervenes between the worshipper of to-day and the great body of worshippers who are at rest in their graves. On such a day as this, hearing these prayers, we feel a kinship with the devout generations who heard them long ago. The

devout lips of the Christian dead murmured the responses which we now murmur; along this road of prayer did their thoughts of our innumerable dead, our brothers and sisters in faith and hope, approach the Maker, even as ours at present approach Him.

Prayers over, the clergyman — who is no Boanerges, or Chrysostom, golden-mouthed, but a loving, genial-hearted pious man, the whole extent of his life, from boyhood until now, full of charity and kindly deeds, as autumn fields with heavy, wheaten ears; the clergyman, I say — for the sentence is becoming unwieldy on my hands and one must double back to secure connection — read out in that silvery voice of his, which is sweeter than any music to my ear, those chapters of the New Testament that deal with the birth of the Saviour. And the red-faced rustic congregation hung on the good man's voice as he spoke of the Infant brought forth in a manger, of the shining angels that appeared in the mid-air to the shepherds, of the miraculous star that took its station in the sky, and of the wise men who came from afar and laid their gifts of the frankincense and myrrh at the feet of the child. With the story every one was familiar, but on that day, and backed by the persuasive melody of the reader's voice it seemed to all quite new — at least they listened attentively as if it were. The discourse that followed possessed no remarkable thoughts; it dealt simply with the goodness of the Maker of heaven and earth, and the shortness of time, with the duties of thankfulness and charity to the poor; and I am persuaded that every one who heard returned to his house in a better frame of mind. And so the service remitted us all to our own homes, to what roast-beef and plum-pudding slender means permitted, to gatherings

around cheerful fires, to half-pleasant, half-sad remembrances of the dead and absent.

ALEXANDER SMITH

By the Christmas Fire

WHEN the fire has reached a degree of intensity and magnitude which Rosalind thinks adequate to the occasion, I take down a well-worn volume which opens of itself at a well-worn page. It is a book which I have read and reread many times, and always with a kindling sympathy and affection for the man who wrote it; in whatever mood I take it up, there is something in it which touches me with a sense of kinship. It is not a great book, but it is a book of the heart, and books of the heart have passed beyond the outer court of criticism before we bestow upon them that phrase of supreme regard. There are other books of the heart around me, but on Christmas Eve it is Alexander Smith's "Dreamthorp" which always seems to lie at my hand, and when I take up the well-worn volume it falls open at the essay on "Christmas." It is a good many years since Rosalind and I began to read together on Christmas Eve this beautiful meditation on the season, and now it has gathered about itself such a host of memories that it has become part of our common past. It is indeed a veritable palimpsest, overlaid with tender and gracious recollections out of which the original thought gains a new and subtle sweetness. As I read it aloud I know that she sees once more the familiar landscape about Dreamthorp, with the low dark hill in the background, and over it "the tender radiance that precedes the moon," the village windows are all lighted and

the "whole place shines like a congregation of glow-worms." There are the skaters still "leaning against the frosty wind"; there is "the gray church tower amid the leafless elms," around which the echoes of the morning peal of Christmas bells still hover; the village folk have gathered, "in their best dresses and their best faces"; the beautiful service of the church has been read and answered with heartfelt responses, the familiar story has been told again simply and urgently, with applications for every thankful soul, and then the congregation has gone to its homes and its festivities — all these things, I am sure, lie within Rosalind's vision although she seems to see nothing but the ruddy blaze of the fire; all these things I see as I have seen them these many Christmas Eves agone; but with this familiar landscape there are mingled all the sweet and sorrowful memories of our common life, recalled at this hour that the light of the highest truth may interpret them anew in the divine language of hope. I read on until I come to the quotation from the "Hymn to the Nativity" and then I close the book, and take up a copy of Milton close at hand.

HAMILTON W. MABIE in *My Study Fire*

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Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity

THIS is the month, and this the happy morn
Wherein the Son of Heaven's Eternal King,
Of wedded maid and virgin mother born,
Our great redemption from above did bring;
For so the holy sages once did sing

That He our deadly forfeit should release,
And with His Father work us a perpetual peace.

That glorious Form, that Light unsufferable,
And that far-beaming blaze of Majesty
Wherewith He, wont at Heaven's high council-table
To sit the midst of Trinal Unity,
He laid aside; and, here with us to be,
Forsook the courts of everlasting day,
And chose with us a darksome house of mortal clay.

Say, heavenly Muse, shall not thy sacred vein
Afford a present to the Infant God?
Hast thou no verse, no hymn, or solemn strain
To welcome Him to this His new abode
Now while the heaven, by the sun's team untrod,
Hath took no print of the approaching light,
And all the spangled host keep watch in squadrons bright?

See how from far, upon the eastern road,
The star-led wizards haste with odours sweet:
O run, prevent them with thy humble ode
And lay it lowly at His blessed feet;
Have thou the honour first thy Lord to greet,
And join thy voice unto the Angel quire
From out His secret altar touched with hallow'd fire.

The Hymn

It was the winter wild
While the heaven-born Child
All meanly wrapt in the rude manger lies;
Nature in awe to Him

Had doff'd her gaudy trim,
With her great Master so to sympathize:
It was no season then for her
To wanton with the sun, her lusty paramour.

Only with speeches fair
She woos the gentle air
To hide her guilty front with innocent snow;
And on her naked shame,
Pollute with sinful blame,
The saintly veil of maiden white to throw;
Confounded, that her Maker's eyes
Should look so near upon her foul deformities.

But He, her fears to cease,
Sent down the meek-eyed Peace;
She, crown'd with olive green, came softly sliding
Down through the turning sphere,
His ready harbinger,
With turtle wing the amorous clouds dividing;
And waving wide her myrtle wand,
She strikes a universal peace through sea and land.

No war, or battle's sound
Was heard the world around:
The idle spear and shield were high uphung;
The hooked chariot stood
Unstain'd with hostile blood;
The trumpet spake not to the armed throng;
And kings sat still with awful eye,
As if they surely knew their sovran Lord was by.

But peaceful was the night
Wherein the Prince of Light

His reign of peace upon the earth began;
The winds, with wonder whist,
Smoothly, the waters kist,
Whispering new joys to the mild ocean —
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmed wave.

The stars, with deep amaze,
Stand fix'd in steadfast gaze,
Bending one way their precious influence;
And will not take their flight
For all the morning light,
Or Lucifer that often warn'd them thence;
But in their glimmering orbs did glow
Until their Lord Himself bespake, and bid them go.

And though the shady gloom
Had given day her room,
The sun himself withheld his wonted speed,
And hid his head for shame,
As his inferior flame
The new-enlightened world no more should need;
He saw a greater Sun appear
Than his bright throne, or burning axletree could bear.

The shepherds on the lawn
Or ere the point of dawn
Sate simply chatting in a rustic row;
Full little thought they than
That the mighty Pan
Was kindly come to live with them below;
Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep
Was all that did their silly thoughts so busy keep: —

When such music sweet
Their hearts and ears did greet
As never was by mortal finger strook —
Divinely-warbled voice
Answering the stringed noise,
As all their souls in blissful rapture took:
The air, such pleasure loth to lose,
With thousand echoes still prolongs each heavenly close.

* * * * * * *

Such music (as 'tis said)
Before was never made
But when of old the Sons of Morning sung,
While the Creator great
His constellations set
And the well-balanced world on hinges hung;
And cast the dark foundations deep,
And bid the weltering waves their oozy channel keep.

Ring out, ye crystal spheres!
Once bless our human ears,
If ye have power to touch our senses so;
And let your silver chime
Move in melodious time;
And let the bass of heaven's deep organ blow;
And with your ninefold harmony
Make up full consort to the angelic symphony.

For if such holy song
Enwrap our fancy long,
Time will run back, and fetch the age of gold;
And speckled Vanity
Will sicken soon and die,

And leprous sin will melt from earthly mould;
And Hell itself will pass away,
And leave her dolorous mansions to the peering day.

Yea, Truth and Justice then
Will down return to men,
Orb'd in a rainbow; and, like glories wearing,
Mercy will sit between
Throned in celestial sheen,
With radiant feet the tissued clouds down steering;
And Heaven, as at some festival,
Will open wide the gates of her high palace-hall.

* * * * * * *

But see! the Virgin blest
Hath laid her Babe to rest;
Time is, our tedious song should here have ending:
Heaven's youngest-teemed star
Hath fix'd her polish'd car,
Her sleeping Lord with hand-maid lamp attending:
And all about the courtly stable
Bright-harnessed Angels sit in order serviceable.

JOHN MILTON

Christmas Church

WHEN I awoke on Christmas morning, while I lay musing on my pillow, I heard the sound of little feet pattering outside of the door, and a whispering consultation. Presently a choir of small voices chanted forth an old Christmas carol, the burden of which was,

Rejoice, our Saviour he was born
On Christmas Day in the morning.

I rose softly, slipped on my clothes, opened the door suddenly, and beheld one of the most beautiful little fairy groups that a painter could imagine. It consisted of a boy and two girls, the eldest not more than six, and lovely as seraphs. They were going the rounds of the house, and singing at every chamber-door; but my sudden appearance frightened them into mute bashfulness. They remained for a moment playing on their lips with their fingers, and now and then stealing a shy glance from under their eyebrows, until, as if by one impulse, they scampered away, and as they turned an angle of the gallery, I heard them laughing in triumph at their escape.

Everything conspired to produce kind and happy feelings in this stronghold of old-fashioned hospitality. The window of my chamber looked out upon what in summer would have been a beautiful landscape. There was a sloping lawn, a fine stream winding at the foot of it, and a tract of park beyond, with noble clumps of trees, and herds of deer. At a distance was a neat hamlet, with the smoke from the cottage chimneys hanging over it; and a church with its dark spire in strong relief against the clear cold sky. The house was surrounded with evergreens, according to the English custom, which would have given almost an appearance of summer; but the morning was extremely frosty; the light vapour of the preceding evening had been precipitated by the cold, and covered all the trees and every blade of grass with its fine crystallizations. The rays of a bright morning sun had a dazzling effect among the glittering foliage. A robin, perched upon the top of a mountain-ash that hung its clusters of red berries just before my window, was basking himself in the sunshine, and piping a few querulous notes;



THE VIRGIN ADORING THE INFANT CHILD. *Correggio.*

and a peacock was displaying all the glories of his train, and strutting with the pride and gravity of a Spanish grandee on the terrace-walk below.

I had scarcely dressed myself, when a servant appeared to invite me to family prayers. I afterwards understood that early morning service was read on every Sunday and saint's day throughout the year, either by Mr. Bracebridge or by some member of the family. It was once almost universally the case at the seats of the nobility and gentry of England, and it is much to be regretted that the custom is fallen into neglect; for the dullest observer must be sensible of the order and serenity prevalent in those households, where the occasional exercise of a beautiful form of worship in the morning gives, as it were, the key-note to every temper for the day, and attunes every spirit to harmony.

"If you are disposed to go to church," said Frank Bracebridge, "I can promise you a specimen of my cousin Simon's musical achievements. As the church is destitute of an organ, he has formed a band from the village amateurs, and established a musical club for their improvement; he has also sorted a choir, as he sorted my father's pack of hounds, according to the directions of Jervaise Markham, in his Country Contentments; for the bass he has sought out all the 'deep solemn mouths,' and for the tenor the 'loud ringing mouths,' among the country bumpkins; and for 'sweet mouths,' he has culled with curious taste among the prettiest lasses in the neighbourhood; though these last, he affirms, are the most difficult to keep in tune; your pretty female singer being exceedingly wayward and capricious, and very liable to accident."

As the morning, though frosty, was remarkably fine

and clear, the most of the family walked to the church, which was a very old building of gray stone, and stood near a village, about half-a-mile from the park gate. Adjoining it was a low snug parsonage, which seemed coeval with the church. The front of it was perfectly matted with a yew-tree that had been trained against its walls, through the dense foliage of which apertures had been formed to admit light into the small antique lattices. As we passed this sheltered nest, the parson issued forth and preceded us.

* * * * * * *

The usual services of the choir were managed tolerably well, the vocal parts generally lagging a little behind the instrumental, and some loitering fiddler now and then making up for lost time by travelling over a passage with prodigious celerity, and clearing more bars than the keenest fox-hunter to be in at the death. But the great trial was an anthem that had been prepared and arranged by Master Simon, and on which he had founded great expectation. Unluckily there was a blunder at the very outset; the musicians became flurried; Master Simon was in a fever, everything went on lamely and irregularly until they came to a chorus beginning "Now let us sing with one accord," which seemed to be a signal for parting company: all became discord and confusion; each shifted for himself, and got to the end as well, or rather as soon, as he could, excepting one old chorister in a pair of horn spectacles bestriding and pinching a long sonorous nose; who, happening to stand a little apart, and being wrapped up in his own melody, kept on a quavering course, wriggling his head, ogling his book, and winding all up by a nasal solo of at least three bars' duration.

The parson gave us a most erudite sermon on the rites and ceremonies of Christmas, and the propriety of observing it not merely as a day of thanksgiving, but of rejoicing; supporting the correctness of his opinions by the earliest usages of the Church, and enforcing them by the authorities of Theophilus of Cesarea, St. Cyprian, St. Chrysostom, St. Augustine and a cloud more of Saints and Fathers, from whom he made copious quotations. I was a little at a loss to perceive the necessity of such a mighty array of forces to maintain a point which no one present seemed inclined to dispute; but I soon found that the good man had a legion of ideal adversaries to contend with; having, in the course of his researches on the subject of Christmas, got completely embroiled in the sectarian controversies of the Revolution, when the Puritans made such a fierce assault upon the ceremonies of the Church, and poor old Christmas was driven out of the land by proclamation of parliament. The worthy parson lived but with times past, and knew but a little of the present.

Shut up among worm-eaten tomes in the retirement of his antiquated little study, the pages of old times were to him as the gazettes of the day; while the era of the Revolution was mere modern history. He forgot that nearly two centuries had elapsed since the fiery persecution of poor mince-pie throughout the land; when plum-porridge was denounced as "mere popery," and roast beef as anti-christian; and that Christmas has been brought in again triumphantly with the merry court of King Charles at the Restoration. He kindled into warmth with the ardour of his contest, and the host of imaginary foes with whom he had to combat; had a stubborn conflict with old Prynne and two or three other forgotten champions of the Round

heads, on the subject of Christmas festivity; and concluded by urging his hearers, in the most solemn and affecting manner, to stand to the traditionary customs of their fathers, and feast and make merry on this joyful anniversary of the Church.

I have seldom known a sermon attended apparently with more immediate effects; for on leaving the church the congregation seemed one and all possessed with the gaiety of spirit so earnestly enjoined by their pastor. The elder folks gathered in knots in the churchyard, greeting and shaking hands; and the children ran about crying Ule! Ule! and repeating some uncouth rhymes, which the parson, who had joined us, informed me had been handed down from days of yore. The villagers doffed their hats to the Squire as he passed, giving him the good wishes of the season with every appearance of heartfelt sincerity, and were invited by him to the Hall, to take something to keep out the cold of the weather; and I heard blessings uttered by several of the poor, which convinced me that, in the midst of his enjoyments, the worthy old cavalier had not forgotten the true Christmas virtue of charity.

WASHINGTON IRVING

Dolly urges Silas Marner to go to Church on Christmas Day

"THERE'S the bakehus if you could make up your mind to spend a twopence on the oven now and then, — not every week, in course — I shouldn't like to do that myself, — you might carry your bit o' dinner there, for it's nothing but right to have a bit o' summat hot of a Sunday,

and not to make it as you can't know your dinner from Saturday. But now, upo' Christmas-day, this blessed Christmas as is ever coming, if you was to take your dinner to the bakehus, and go to church, and see the holly and the yew, and hear the anthim, and then take the sacramen', you'd be a deal the better, and you'd know which end you stood on, and you could put your trust i' Them as knows better nor we do, seein' you'd ha' done what it lies on us all to do."

Dolly's exhortation, which was an unusually long effort of speech for her, was uttered in the soothing persuasive tone with which she would have tried to prevail on a sick man to take his medicine, or a basin of gruel for which he had no appetite.

* * * * * * *

But now, little Aaron, having become used to the weaver's awful presence, had advanced to his mother's side, and Silas, seeming to notice him for the first time, tried to return Dolly's signs of good-will by offering the lad a bit of lard-cake. Aaron shrank back a little, and rubbed his head against his mother's shoulder, but still thought the piece of cake worth the risk of putting his hand out for it.

"Oh, for shame, Aaron," said his mother, taking him on her lap, however; "why, you don't want cake again yet awhile. He's wonderful hearty," she went on, with a little sigh — "that he is, God knows. He's my youngest, and we spoil him sadly, for either me or the father must allays hev him in our sight — that we must."

She stroked Aaron's brown head, and thought it must do Master Marner good to see such a "pictur of a child.' But Marner, on the other side of the hearth, saw the neat-

featured rosy face as a mere dim round, with two dark spots in it.

"And he's got a voice like a bird — you wouldn't think," Dolly went on; "he can sing a Christmas carril as his father's taught him; and I take it for a token as he'll come to good, as he can learn the good tunes so quick. Come, Aaron, stan' up and sing the carril to Master Marner, come."

Aaron replied by rubbing his forehead against his mother's shoulder. "Oh, that's naughty," said Dolly, gently. "Stan' up, when mother tells you, and let me hold the cake till you've done."

Aaron was not indisposed to display his talents, even to an ogre, under protecting circumstances; and after a few more signs of coyness, consisting chiefly in rubbing the backs of his hands over his eyes, and then peeping between them at Master Marner, to see if he looked anxious for the "carril," he at length allowed his head to be duly adjusted, and standing behind the table, which let him appear above it only as far as his broad frill, so that he looked like a cherubic head untroubled with a body, he began with a clear chirp, and in a melody that had the rhythm of an industrious hammer, —

"God rest you merry, gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,
For Jesus Christ our Saviour
Was born on Christmas-Day."

Dolly listened with a devout look, glancing at Marner in some confidence that this strain would help to allure him to church.

"That's Christmas music," she said, when Aaron had ended, and had secured his piece of cake again. "There's

no other music equil to the Christmas music — 'Hark the erol angils sing.' And you may judge what it is at church, Master Marner, with the bassoon and the voices, as you can't help thinking you've got to a better place a'ready — for I wouldn't speak ill o' this world, seeing as Them put us in it as knows best; but what wi' the drink, and the quarrelling, and the bad illnesses, and the hard dying, as I've seen times and times, one's thankful to hear of a better. The boy sings pretty, don't he, Master Marner?"

"Yes," said Silas, absently, "very pretty."

The Christmas carol, with its hammer-like rhythm, had fallen on his ears as strange music, quite unlike a hymn, and could have none of the effect Dolly contemplated. But he wanted to show her that he was grateful, and the only mode that occurred to him was to offer Aaron a bit more cake.

GEORGE ELIOT

Yule in the Old Town

A WHOLE fortnight we kept it. Real Christmas was from Little Christmas Eve, which was the night before the Holy Eve proper, till New Year's. Then there was a week of supplementary festivities before things slipped back into their wonted groove. That was the time of parties and balls. The great ball of the year was on the day after Christmas, — Second Christmas Day we called it, — when all the quality attended at the club-house, where the amtman and the burgomaster, the bishop and the rector of the Latin School, did the honors and received the people. That was the grandest of the town functions. The school ball, late in autumn, was the jolliest, for then the boys

invited each the girl he liked best, and the older people were guests and outsiders, so to speak. The Latin School — the Cathedral School, as it was still called — was the oldest institution there next to the church and the bishop, and when it took the stage it was easily first while it lasted. The Yule ball, though it was a rather more formal affair, for all that was neither stiff nor tiresome. Nothing was, in the Old Town; there was too much genuine kindness for that. And then it was the recognized occasion when matches were made by enterprising mammas, or by the young themselves, and when engagements were declared and discussed as the great news of the day. We heard all of those things afterward and thought a great fuss was being made over nothing much. For when a young couple were declared engaged, that meant that there was no more fun to be got out of them. They were given, after that, to mooning about by themselves and to chasing us children away when we ran across them; until they happily returned to their senses, got married, and became reasonable human beings once more.

When we had been sent to bed, father and mother used to go away in their Sunday very best, and we knew they would not return until two o'clock in the morning, a fact which alone invested the occasion with unwonted gravity, for the Old Town kept early hours. At ten o'clock, when the watchman droned his sleepy lay, absurdly warning the people to

> "Be quick and bright,
> Watch fire and light,
> Our clock it has struck ten,"

it was ordinarily tucked in and asleep. But that night we lay awake a long time listening to the muffled sound of

heavy wheels in the snow, rolling unceasingly past, and trying to picture to ourselves the grandeur they conveyed. Every carriage in the town was then in use and doing overtime. I think there were as many as four.

When we were not dancing or playing games, we literally ate our way through the two holiday weeks. Pastry by the mile did we eat, and general indigestion brooded over the town when it emerged into the white light of the new year. At any rate, it ought to have done so. It is a prime article of faith with the Danes to this day that for any one to go out of a friend's house, or of anybody's house, in the Christmas season without partaking of its cheer, is to "bear away their Yule," which no one must do on any account. Every house was a bakery from the middle of December until Christmas Eve, and, oh! the quantities of cakes we ate, and such cakes! We were sixteen normally in our home, and mother mixed the dough for her cakes in a veritable horse trough kept for that exclusive purpose. As much as a sack of flour went in, I guess, and gallons of molasses, and whatever else went to the mixing. For weeks there had been long and anxious speculations as to "what father would do," and gloomy conferences between him and mother over the state of the family pocketbook, which was never plethoric; but at last the joyful message ran through the house from attic to kitchen that the appropriation had been made, "even for citron," which meant throwing all care to the winds. The thrill of it, when we children stood by and saw the generous avalanche going into the trough! What would not come out of it! The whole family turned to and helped make the cakes and cut the "pepper nuts," which were little squares of cake dough we played cards for and stuffed our pockets with, gnashing them incessantly. Talk

about eating between meals: ours was a continuous performance for two solid weeks.

The pepper nuts were the real staple of Christmas to us children. We rolled the dough in long strings like slender eels and then cut it a little on the bias. They were good, those nuts, when baked brown. I wish I had some now.

Christmas Eve was, of course, the great and blessed time. That was the one night in the year when in the gray old Domkirke services were held by candle-light.

A myriad wax candles twinkled in the gloom, but did not dispel it. It lingered under the great arches where the voice of the venerable minister, the responses of the congregation, and above it all the boyish treble of the choir, billowed and strove, now dreamingly with the memories of ages past, now sharply, tossed from angle to corner in the stone walls, and again in long thunderous echoes sweeping all before it on the triumphant strains of the organ, like a victorious army with banners crowding through the halls of time. So it sounded to me as sleep gently tugged at my eyelids. The air grew heavy with the smell of evergreens and of burning wax, and as the thunder of war drew farther and farther away, in the shadow of the great pillars stirred the phantoms of mailed knights whose names were hewn in the gravestones there. We youngsters clung to the skirts of mother as we went out and the great doors fell to behind us. And yet those Christmas eves, with mother's gentle eyes forever inseparable from them, and with the glad cries of "Merry Christmas!" ringing all about, have left a touch of sweet peace in my heart which all the years have not effaced, nor ever will. . . .

When Ansgarius preached the White Christ to the vikings of the North, so runs the legend of the Christmas-tree, the

Lord sent his three messengers, Faith, Hope, and Love, to help light the first tree. Seeking one that should be high as hope, wide as love, and that bore the sign of the cross on every bough, they chose the balsam fir, which best of all the trees in the forest met the requirements. . . . Wax candles are the only real thing for a Christmas-tree, candles of wax that mingle their perfume with that of the burning fir, not the by-product of some coal-oil or other abomination. What if the boughs do catch fire? They can be watched, and too many candles are tawdry, anyhow. Also, red apples, oranges, and old-fashioned cornucopias made of colored paper, and made at home, look a hundred times better and fitter in the green; and so do drums and toy trumpets and wald-horns, and a rocking-horse reined up in front that need not have cost forty dollars, or anything like it.

I am thinking of one, or rather two, a little piebald team with a wooden seat between, for which mother certainly did not give over seventy-five cents at the store, that as "Belcher and Mamie" — the name was bestowed on the beasts at sight by Kate, aged three, who bossed the play-room — gave a generation of romping children more happiness than all the expensive railroads and trolley-cars and steam engines that are considered indispensable to keeping Christmas nowadays. And the Noah's Ark with Noah and his wife and all the animals that went two by two — ah, well, I haven't set out to preach a sermon on extravagance that makes no one happier, but I wish — The legend makes me think of the holly that grew in our Danish woods. We called it "Christthorn," for to us it was of that the crown of thorns was made with which the cruel soldiers mocked our Saviour, and the red berries were the drops of blood that fell from his

anguished brow. Therefore the holly was a sacred tree, and to this day the woods in which I find it seem to me like the forest where the Christmas roses bloomed in the night when the Lord was born, different from all other woods, and better.

JACOB RIIS in *The Old Town*

The Mahogany Tree

CHRISTMAS is here;
Winds whistle shrill,
Icy and chill,
Little care we:
Little we fear
Weather without,
Sheltered about
The mahogany tree.

Once on the boughs,
Birds of rare plume
Sang, in its bloom;
Night-birds are we:
Here we carouse
Singing, like them,
Perched round the stem
Of the jolly old tree.

Here let us sport,
Boys, as we sit;
Laughter and wit
Flashing so free.
Life is but short —
When we are gone,

Let them sing on,
Round the old tree.

Evenings we knew,
Happy as this;
Faces we miss,
Pleasant to see.
Kind hearts and true,
Gentle and just,
Peace to your dust!
We sing round the tree.

Care, like a dun,
Lurks at the gate:
Let the dog wait:
Happy we'll be!
Drink every one;
Pile up the coals,
Fill the red bowls,
Round the old tree!

Drain we the cup. —
Friend, art afraid?
Spirits are laid
In the Red Sea.
Mantle it up;
Empty it yet;
Let us forget,
Round the old tree.

Sorrows, begone!
Life and its ills,
Duns and their bills,
Bid we to flee.

Come with the dawn,
Blue-devil sprite,
Leave us to-night,
Round the old tree.

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

The Holly and the Ivy

THE Holly and the Ivy,
Now both are full well grown;
Of all the trees that spring in wood,
The Holly bears the crown.
The Holly bears a blossom,
As white as lily flow'r;
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ,
To be our sweet Saviour,
To be our sweet Saviour.

The Holly bears a berry,
As red as any blood;
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ,
To do poor sinners good.
The Holly bears a prickle,
As sharp as any thorn;
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ,
On Christmas day in the morn,
On Christmas day in the morn.

The Holly bears a bark,
As bitter as any gall;
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ,
For to redeem us all.

Christmas Day

The Holly and the Ivy,
 Now both are full well grown;
Of all the trees that spring in wood,
 The Holly bears the crown,
 The Holly bears the crown.

Old English Song

Ballade of Christmas Ghosts

BETWEEN the moonlight and the fire,
 In winter twilights long ago,
What ghosts we raised for your desire,
 To make your merry blood run slow;
How old, how grave, how wise we grow,
 No Christmas ghost can make us chill,
Save those that troop in mournful row,
 The ghosts we all can raise at will!

The beasts can talk in barn and byre,
 On Christmas Eve, old legends know,
As year by year the years retire;
 We men fall silent then, I trow;
Such sights hath memory to show,
 Such voices from the silence thrill,
Such shapes return with Christmas snow —
 The ghosts we all can raise at will.

Oh, children of the village choir,
 Your carols on the midnight throw;
Oh, bright across the mist and mire,
 Ye ruddy hearths of Christmas, glow!
Beat back the dread, beat down the woe,
 Let's cheerily descend the hill;

Be welcome all, to come or go,
The ghosts we all can raise at will!

ENVOY

Friend, sursum corda, soon and slow
We part like guests, who've joyed their fill;
Forget them not, nor mourn them so,
The ghosts we all can raise at will.

ANDREW LANG

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Christmas Treasures

I COUNT my treasures o'er with care, —
The little toy my darling knew,
A little sock of faded hue,
A little lock of golden hair.

Long years ago this holy time,
My little one — my all to me —
Sat robed in white upon my knee
And heard the merry Christmas chime.

"Tell me, my little golden-head,
If Santa Claus should come to-night,
What shall he bring my baby bright, —
What treasure for my boy?" I said.

And then he named this little toy,
While in his round and mournful eyes
There came a look of sweet surprise,
That spake his quiet, trustful joy.

And as he lisped his evening prayer
He asked the boon with childish grace,
Then, toddling to the chimney place,
He hung this little stocking there.

That night, while lengthening shadows crept,
I saw the white-winged angels come
With singing to our lowly home
And kiss my darling as he slept.

They must have heard his little prayer,
For in the morn, with rapturous face,
He toddled to the chimney-place,
And found this little treasure there.

They came again one Christmas-tide, —
That angel host, so fair and white!
And singing all that glorious night,
They lured my darling from my side.

A little sock, a little toy,
A little lock of golden hair,
The Christmas music on the air,
A watching for my baby boy!

But if again that angel train
And golden-head come back for me,
To bear me to Eternity,
My watching will not be in vain!

From *A Little Book of Western Verse;* copyright, 1889, by Eugene Field; published by Charles Scribner's Sons

Wassailer's Song

WASSAIL! wassail! all over the town,
Our toast it is white, and our ale it is brown;
Our bowl is made of a maplin tree;
We be good fellows all; — I drink to thee.

Here's to our horse, and to his right ear,
God send master a happy new year;
A happy new year as e'er he did see, —
With my wassailing bowl I drink to thee.

Here's to our mare, and to her right eye,
God send our mistress a good Christmas pie;
A good Christmas pie as e'er I did see, —
With my wassailing bowl I drink to thee.

Here's to our cow, and to her long tail,
God send our master us never may fail
Of a cup of good beer: I pray you draw near,
And our jolly wassail it's then you shall hear.

Be here any maids? I suppose here be some;
Sure they will not let young men stand on the cold stone!
Sing hey O, maids! come trole back the pin,
And the fairest maid in the house let us all in.

Come, butler, come, bring us a bowl of the best;
I hope your sould in heaven will rest;
But if you do bring us a bowl of the small,
Then down fall butler, and bowl and all.

ROBERT SOUTHWELL

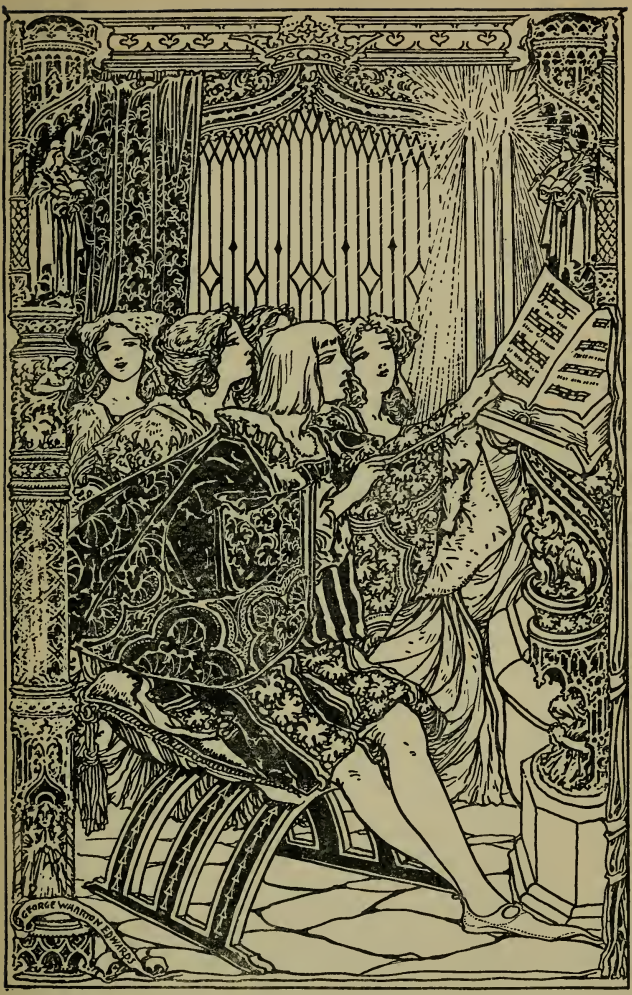
VI

CHRISTMAS HYMNS



CHRISTMAS HYMNS

A Hymn on the Nativity
While Shepherds Watched
O, Little Town of Bethlehem
The First, Best Christmas Night
It Came upon the Midnight Clear
A Christmas Hymn
The Song of the Shepherds
A Christmas Hymn
A Christmas Hymn for Children
Slumber-Songs of the Madonna


GEORGE WALTON EDWARDS

HARK! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born King!
Peace on earth, and mercy mild;
God and sinners reconciled."

CHARLES WESLEY

A Hymn on the Nativity

I SING the birth was born to-night,
The author both of life and light;
The angels so did sound it.
And like the ravished shepherds said,
Who saw the light, and were afraid,
Yet searched, and true they found it.

The Son of God, th' Eternal King,
That did us all salvation bring,
And freed the soul from danger;
He whom the whole world could not take,
The Word, which heaven and earth did make,
Was now laid in a manger.

The Father's wisdom willed it so,
The Son's obedience knew no No,
Both wills were in one stature;
And as that wisdom had decreed,
The Word was now made Flesh indeed,
And took on Him our nature.

What comfort by Him do we win,
Who made Himself the price of sin,
To make us heirs of Glory!
To see this babe, all innocence,
A martyr born in our defence:
Can man forget this story?

BEN JONSON

While Shepherds Watched

WHILE shepherds watch'd their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The Angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around.

"Fear not," said he (for mighty dread
Had seized their troubled mind);
"Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind.

"To you in David's town this day
Is born of David's line
The Saviour, who is Christ the Lord;
And this shall be the sign:

"The heavenly Babe you there shall find
To human view display'd,
All meanly wrapt in swathing-bands,
And in a manger laid."

Thus spake the seraph; and forthwith
Appear'd a shining throng
Of angels praising God, and thus
Address'd their joyful song:

"All glory be to God on high,
And to the earth be peace;
Good-will henceforth from heaven to men
Begin, and never cease!"

NAHUM TATE

O, Little Town of Bethlehem

O, LITTLE town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee to-night.

For Christ is born of Mary;
And gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wondering love!
O, morning stars, together
Proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing to God the King,
And peace to men on earth.

How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear His coming,
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him still,
The dear Christ enters in.

O, holy Child of Bethlehem!
Descend to us, we pray!
Cast out our sin, and enter in,
Be born to us to-day.

We hear the Christmas angels
The great, glad tidings tell;
O, come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Emmanuel.

PHILLIPS BROOKS

The First, Best Christmas Night

LIKE small curled feathers, white and soft,
The little clouds went by,
Across the moon, and past the stars,
And down the western sky:
In upland pastures, where the grass
With frosted dew was white,
Like snowy clouds the young sheep lay,
That first, best Christmas night.

The shepherds slept; and, glimmering faint,
With twist of thin, blue smoke,
Only their fire's cracking flames
The tender silence broke —
Save when a young lamb raised his head,
Or, when the night wind blew,
A nesting bird would softly stir,
Where dusky olives grew —

With finger on her solemn lip,
Night hushed the shadowy earth,
And only stars and angels saw
The little Saviour's birth;
Then came such flash of silver light
Across the bending skies,

The wondering shepherds woke, and hid
Their frightened, dazzled eyes!

And all their gentle sleepy flock
Looked up, then slept again,
Nor knew the light that dimmed the stars
Brought endless peace to men —
Nor even heard the gracious words
That down the ages ring —
"The Christ is born! the Lord has come,
Good-will on earth to bring!"

Then o'er the moonlit, misty fields,
Dumb with the world's great joy,
The shepherds sought the white-walled town,
Where lay the baby boy —
And oh, the gladness of the world,
The glory of the skies,
Because the longed-for Christ looked up
In Mary's happy eyes!

MARGARET DELAND in *The Old Garden and Other Verses*

By permission of Houghton Mifflin Company

It Came upon the Midnight Clear

IT came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth
To touch their harps of gold:
Peace to the earth, good-will to men,
From heaven's all gracious King.

The world in solemn stillness lay
To hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come,
With peaceful wings unfurled;
And still their heavenly music floats
O'er all the weary world:
Above its sad and lowly plains
They bend on hovering wing,
And ever o'er its Babel-sounds
The blessed angels sing.

Yet with the woes of sin and strife
The world has suffered long.
Beneath the angel-strain have rolled
Two thousand years of wrong;
And man at war with man hears not
The love-song that they bring;
Oh, hush the noise, ye men of strife,
And hear the angels sing.

O ye beneath life's crushing load,
Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way,
With painful steps and slow,
Look now! for glad and golden hours
Come swiftly on the wing:
Oh, rest beside the weary road,
And hear the angels sing.

For lo! the days are hastening on,
By prophet bards foretold,

When with the ever-circling years
 Comes round the age of gold;
When peace shall over all the earth
 Its ancient splendours fling,
And the whole world send back the song
 Which now the angels sing.

EDMUND HAMILTON SEARS

A Christmas Hymn

SING, Christmas bells!
 Say to the earth this is the morn
Whereon our Saviour-King is born;
 Sing to all men, — the bond, the free,
The rich, the poor, the high, the low,
 The little child that sports in glee,
The aged folk that tottering go, —
 Proclaim the morn
 That Christ is born,
That saveth them and saveth me!

 Sing, angel host!
Sing of the star that God has placed
Above the manger in the east;
 Sing of the glories of the night,
The Virgin's sweet humility,
 The Babe with kingly robes bedight, —
Sing to all men where'er they be
 This Christmas morn;
 For Christ is born,
That saveth them and saveth me.

Sing, sons of earth!
O ransomed seed of Adam, sing!
God liveth, and we have a king!
The curse is gone, the bond are free, —
By Bethlehem's star that brightly beamed,
By all the heavenly signs that be,
We know that Israel is redeemed;
That on this morn
The Christ is born
That saveth you and saveth me!

Sing, O my heart!
Sing thou in rapture this dear morn
Whereon the blessed Prince is born!
And as thy songs shall be of love,
So let my deeds be charity, —
By the dear Lord that reigns above,
By Him that died upon the tree,
By this fair morn
Whereon is born
The Christ that saveth all and me!

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The Song of the Shepherds

IT was near the first cock-crowing,
And Orion's wheel was going,
When an angel stood before us and our hearts were sore afraid.
Lo! his face was like the lightning,

When the walls of heaven are whitening,
And he brought us wondrous tidings of a joy that should not fade.

Then a Splendor shone around us,
In a still field where he found us,
A-watch upon the Shepherd Tower and waiting for the light;
There where David, as a stripling,
Saw the ewes and lambs go rippling
Down the little hills and hollows at the falling of the night.

Oh, what tender, sudden faces
Filled the old familiar places,
The barley-fields, where Ruth of old went gleaning with the birds.
Down the skies the host came swirling,
Like sea-waters white and whirling,
And our hearts were strangely shaken by the wonder of their words.

Haste, O people: all are bidden —
Haste from places high or hidden:
In Mary's Child the Kingdom comes, the heaven in beauty bends!
He has made all life completer,
He has made the Plain Way sweeter,
For the stall is His first shelter, and the cattle His first friends.

He has come! the skies are telling:
He has quit the glorious dwelling;
And first the tidings came to us, the humble shepherd folk.

He has come to field and manger,
And no more is God a Stranger:
He comes as Common Man at home with cart and crookèd yoke.

As the shadow of a cedar
To a traveler in gray Kedar
Will be the kingdom of His love, the kingdom without end.
Tongue and ages may disclaim Him,
Yet the Heaven of heavens will name Him
Lord of prophets, Light of nations, elder Brother, tender Friend.

EDWIN MARKHAM in *Lincoln and Other Poems*

By permission

A Christmas Hymn

TELL me what is this innumerable throng
Singing in the heavens a loud angelic song?
These are they who come with swift and shining feet
From round about the throne of God the Lord of Light to greet.

O, who are these that hasten beneath the starry sky,
As if with joyful tidings that through the world shall fly?
The faithful shepherds these, who greatly were afeared
When, as they watched their flocks by night, the heavenly host appeared.

Who are these that follow across the hills of night
A star that westward hurries along the fields of light?



THE MADONNA. *Murillo.*

Three wise men from the east who myrrh and treasure bring
To lay them at the feet of him, their Lord and Christ and King.

What babe new-born is this that in a manger cries?
Near on her bed of pain his happy mother lies.
O, see! the air is shaken with white and heavenly wings —
This is the Lord of all the earth, this is the King of kings.

Tell me, how may I join in this holy feast
With all the kneeling world, and I of all the least?
Fear not, O faithful heart, but bring what most is meet;
Bring love alone, true love alone, and lay it at his feet.

RICHARD WATSON GILDER

By permission of Houghton Mifflin Company

A Christmas Hymn for Children

OUR bells ring to all the earth,
In excelsis gloria!
But none for Thee made chimes of mirth
On that great morning of Thy birth.

Our coats they lack not silk nor fur,
In excelsis gloria!
Not such Thy Blessed Mother's were;
Full simple garments covered Her.

Our churches rise up goodly high,
In excelsis gloria!
Low in a stall Thyself did lie,
With hornèd oxen standing by.

Incense we breathe and scent of wine,
In excelsis gloria!
Around Thee rose the breath of kine,
Thy only drink Her breast Divine.

We take us to a happy tree,
In excelsis gloria!
The seed was sown that day for Thee
That blossomed out of Calvary.

Teach us to feed Thy poor with meat,
In excelsis gloria!
Who turnest not when we entreat,
Who givest us Thy Bread to eat.
Amen.

From the volume of *Poems* by JOSEPHINE DASKAM BACON
By permission of Charles Scribner's Sons

Slumber-Songs of the Madonna

PRELUDE

DANTE saw the great white Rose
Half unclose;
Dante saw the golden bees
Gathering from its heart of gold
Sweets untold,
Love's most honeyed harmonies.

Dante saw the threefold bow
Strangely glow,
Saw the Rainbow Vision rise,

And the Flame that wore the crown
Bending down
O'er the flowers of Paradise.

Something yet remained, it seems;
In his dreams
Dante missed — as angels may
In their white and burning bliss —
Some small kiss
Mortals meet with every day.

Italy in splendour faints
'Neath her saints!
O, her great Madonnas, too,
Faces calm as any moon
Glows in June,
Hooded with the night's deep blue!

What remains? I pass and hear
Everywhere,
Ay, or see in silent eyes
Just the song she still would sing.
Thus — a-swing
O'er the cradle where He lies.

I

Sleep, little baby, I love thee;
Sleep, little king, I am bending above thee!
How should I know what to sing
Here in my arms as I swing thee to sleep?
Hushaby low,
Rockaby so,

Kings may have wonderful jewels to bring,
Mother has only a kiss for her king!
Why should my singing so make me to weep?
Only I know that I love thee, I love thee,
Love thee, my little one, sleep.

II

Is it a dream? Ah, yet it seems
Not the same as other dreams!

I can but think that angels sang,
When thou wast born, in the starry sky,
And that their golden harps out-rang
While the silver clouds went by!

The morning sun shuts out the stars,
Which are much loftier than the sun;
But, could we burst our prison-bars
And find the Light whence light begun,
The dreams that heralded thy birth
Were truer than the truths of earth;
And, by that far immortal Gleam,
Soul of my soul, I still would dream!

A ring of light was round thy head,
The great-eyed oxen nigh thy bed
Their cold and innocent noses bowed,
Their sweet breath rose like an incense cloud
In the blurred and mystic lanthorn light!

About the middle of the night
The black door blazed like some great star
With a glory from afar,

Or like some mighty chrysolite
Wherein an angel stood with white
Blinding arrowy bladed wings
Before the throne of the King of kings;
And, through it, I could dimly see
A great steed tethered to a tree.

Then, with crimson gems aflame
Through the door the three kings came,
 And the black Ethiop unrolled
The richly broidered cloth of gold,
 And pourèd forth before thee there
 Gold and frankincense and myrrh!

III

See, what a wonderful smile! Does it mean
 That my little one knows of my love?
Was it meant for an angel that passed unseen,
 And smiled at us both from above?
Does it mean that he knows of the birds and the flowers
That are waiting to sweeten his childhood's hours,
And the tales I shall tell and the games he will play,
And the songs we shall sing and the prayers we shall pray
 In his boyhood's May,
 He and I, one day?

IV

All in the warm blue summer weather
We shall laugh and love together:
 I shall watch my baby growing,
I shall guide his feet,

When the orange trees are blowing,
And the winds are heavy and sweet!
When the orange orchards whiten
I shall see his great eyes brighten
To watch the long-legged camels going
Up the twisted street,
When the orange trees are blowing,
And the winds are sweet.

What does it mean? Indeed, it seems
A dream! Yet not like other dreams!

We shall walk in pleasant vales,
Listening to the shepherd's song,
I shall tell him lovely tales
All day long:
He shall laugh while mother sings
Tales of fishermen and kings.

He shall see them come and go
O'er the wistful sea,
Where rosy oleanders blow
Round blue Lake Galilee,
Kings with fishers' ragged coats
And silver nets across their boats
Dipping through the starry glow,
With crowns for him and me!
Ah, no;
Crowns for him, not me!

Rockaby so! Indeed, it seems
A dream! Yet not like other dreams!

V

Ah, see what a wonderful smile again!
Shall I hide it away in my heart,
To remember one day in a world of pain
When the years have torn us apart,
Little babe,
When the years have torn us apart?

Sleep, my little one, sleep,
Child with the wonderful eyes,
Wild miraculous eyes,
Deep as the skies are deep!
What star-bright glory of tears
Waits in you now for the years
That shall bid you waken and weep?
Ah, in that day, could I kiss you to sleep
Then, little lips, little eyes,
Little lips that are lovely and wise,
Little lips that are dreadful and wise!

VI

Clenched little hands like crumpled roses,
Dimpled and dear,
Feet like flowers that the dawn uncloses,
What do I fear?
Little hands, will you ever be clenched in anguish?
White little limbs, will you droop and languish?
Nay, what do I hear?
I hear a shouting, far away,
You shall ride on a kingly palm-strewn way
Some day!

But when you are crowned with a golden crown
And throned on a golden throne,
You'll forget the manger of Bethlehem town
And your mother that sits alone
Wondering whether the mighty king
Remembers a song she used to sing,
Long ago,—
"Rockaby so,
Kings may have wonderful jewels to bring,
Mother has only a kiss for her king!" . . .

Ah, see what a wonderful smile, once more!
He opens his great dark eyes!
Little child, little king, nay, hush, it is o'er,
My fear of those deep twin skies,—
Little child,
You are all too dreadful and wise!

VII

But now you are mine, all mine,
And your feet can lie in my hand so small,
And your tiny hands in my heart can twine,
And you cannot walk, so you never shall fall,
Or be pierced by the thorns beside the door,
Or the nails that lie upon Joseph's floor;
Through sun and rain, through shadow and shine,
You are mine, all mine!

ALFRED NOYES in *The Golden Hynde*

Copyrighted by Messrs Blackwood in *Forty Singing Seamen*

VII

CHRISTMAS REVELS



CHRISTMAS REVELS

Make me merry both more and less
The Feast of Saint Stephen in Venice
The Feast of Fools
The Feast of the Ass
The Revel of Sir Hugonin de Guisay, 1393
Revels of the Inner Temple — Inns of Court
King Witlaf's Drinking-Horn
Old Christmastide
Christmas Games in "Old Wardle's" Kitchen
A "Mystery" as performed in Mexico




CHARLES·WILLIAM·TOM·EDWARDS

MAKE me merry both more and less,
For now is the time of Christymas!

Let no man come into this hall,
Groom, page, not yet marshall,
But that some sport he bring withal!
For now is the time of Christmas!

If that he say, he cannot sing,
Some other sport then let him bring!
That it may please at this feasting!
For now is the time of Christmas!

If he say he can naught do,
Then for my love ask him no mo!
But to the stocks then let him go!
For now is the time of Christmas!

From a Balliol MS. of about 1540

The Feast of Saint Stephen in Venice

THE Doge's banquets especially took the importance of public spectacles, and were always five in number, given at the feasts of Saint Mark, the Ascension, Saint Vitus, Saint Jerome, and Saint Stephen, after the last of which the distribution of the 'oselle' took place, representing the ducks of earlier days, as the reader will remember. At these great dinners there were generally a hundred guests; the Doge's counsellors, the Heads of the Ten, the Avogadors and the heads of all the other magistracies had a right to be invited, but the rest of the guests were chosen among the functionaries at the Doge's pleasure.

In the banquet-hall there were a number of side-boards on which was exhibited the silver, part of which belonged to the Doge and part to the State, and this was shown twenty-four hours before the feast. It was under the keeping of a special official. The glass service used on the table for flowers and for dessert was of the finest made in Murano. Each service, though this is hard to believe, is said to have been used in public only once, and was designed to recall some important event of contemporary history by trophies, victories, emblems, and allegories. I find this stated by Giustina Renier Michiel, who was a contemporary, was noble, and must have often seen these banquets.

The public was admitted to view the magnificent spectacle during the whole of the first course, and the ladies of the aristocracy went in great numbers. It was their cus-

tom to walk round the tables, talking with those of their friends who sat among the guests, and accepting the fruits and sweetmeats which the Doge and the rest offered them, rising from their seats to do so. The Doge himself rose from his throne to salute those noble ladies whom he wished to distinguish especially. Sovereigns passing through Venice at such times did not disdain to appear as mere spectators at the banquets, which had acquired the importance of national anniversaries.

Between the first and second courses, a majestic chamberlain shook a huge bunch of keys while he walked round the hall, and at this hint all visitors disappeared. The feast sometimes lasted several hours, after which the Doge's squires presented each of the guests with a great basket filled with sweetmeats, fruits, comfits, and the like, and adorned with the ducal arms. Every one rose to thank the Doge for these presents, and he took advantage of the general move to go back to his private apartments. The guests accompanied him to the threshold, where his Serenity bowed to them without speaking, and every one returned his salute in silence. He disappeared within, and all went home.

During this ceremony of leave-taking, the gondoliers of the guests entered the hall of the banquet and each carried the basket received by his master to some lady indicated by the latter. "One may imagine," cries the good Dame Michiel, "what curiosity there was about the destination of the baskets, but the faithful gondoliers regarded mystery as a point of honour, though the basket was of such dimensions that it was impossible to take it anywhere unobserved; happy were they who received these evidences of a regard which at once touched their feeings and flattered their

legitimate pride! The greatest misfortune was to have to share the prize with another."

F. MARION CRAWFORD in *Salve Venetia!*

The Feast of Fools

BELETUS, who lived in 1182, mentions the Feast of Fools, as celebrated in some places on New Year's day, in others on Twelfth Night and in still others the week following. It seems at any rate to have been one of the recognized revels of the Christmas season. In France, at different cathedral churches there was a Bishop or an Archbishop of Fools elected, and in the churches immediately dependent upon the papal see a Pope of Fools.

These mock pontiffs had usually a proper suite of ecclesiastics, and one of their ridiculous ceremonies was to shave the Precentor of Fools upon a stage erected before the church in the presence of the jeering "vulgar populace."

They were mostly attired in the ridiculous dresses of pantomime players and buffoons, and so habited entered the church, and performed the ceremony accompanied by crowds of followers representing monsters or so disguised as to excite fear or laughter. During this mockery of a divine service they sang indecent songs in the choir, ate rich puddings on the corner of the altar, played at dice upon it during the celebration of a mass, incensed it with smoke from old burnt shoes, and ran leaping all over the church. The Bishop or Pope of Fools performed the service and gave benediction, dressed in pontificial robes. When it was concluded he was seated in an open carriage and drawn about the town followed by his train, who in

place of carnival confetti threw filth from a cart upon the people who crowded to see the procession.

These "December liberties," as they were called, were always held at Christmas time or near it, but were not confined to one particular day, and seem to have lasted through the chief part of January. When the ceremony took place upon St. Stephen's Day, they said as part of the mass a burlesque composition, called the Fool's Prose, and upon the festival of St. John the Evangelist, they had another arrangement of ludicrous songs, called the Prose of the Ox.

WILLIAM HONE in *Ancient Mysteries*

The Feast of the Ass

AS this was anciently celebrated in France, it almost entirely consisted of dramatic show. It was instituted in honor of Balaam's ass, and at one of them the clergy walked on Christmas Day in procession, habited to represent the prophets and others.

Moses appeared in an alb and cope with a long beard and a rod. David had a green vestment. Balaam, with an immense pair of spurs, rode on a wooden ass which enclosed a speaker. There were also six Jews and six Gentiles. Among other characters, the poet Virgil was introduced singing monkish rhymes, as a Gentile prophet, and a translator of the sibylline oracles. They thus moved in a procession through the body of the church chanting versicles, and conversing in character on the nativity and kingdom of Christ till they came into the choir.

This service, as performed in the cathedral at Rouen, commenced with a procession in which the clergy repre-

sented the prophets of the Old Testament who foretold the birth of Christ; then followed Balaam mounted on his ass, Zacharias, Elizabeth, John the Baptist, the sibyl, Erythree, Simeon, Virgil, Nebuchadnezzar, and the three children in the furnace. After the procession entered the cathedral, several groups of persons performed the parts of Jews and Gentiles, to whom the choristers addressed speeches; afterwards they called on the prophets one by one, who came forward successively and delivered a passage relative to the Messiah. The other characters advanced to occupy their proper situations, and reply in certain verses to the questions of the choristers. They performed the miracle of the furnace; Nebuchadnezzar spoke, the sibyl appeared at the last, and then an anthem was sung, which concluded the ceremony.

The Missal of an Archbishop of Sens indicates that during such a service, the animal itself, clad with precious priestly ornaments, was solemnly conducted to the middle of the choir, during which procession a hymn in praise of the ass was sung — ending with —

> Amen! bray, most honour'd Ass,
> Sated now with grain and grass:
> Amen repeat, Amen reply,
> And disregard antiquity.
> *Hez va! hez va! hez va! hez!*

The service lasted the whole of a night and part of the next day, and formed altogether the strangest, most ridiculous medley of whatever was usually sung at church festivals. When the choristers were thirsty wine was distributed; in the evening, on a platform before the church, lit by an enormous lantern, the grand chanter of Sens led

a jolly band in performing broadly indecorous interludes. At respective divisions of the service the ass was supplied with drink and provender. In the middle of it, at the signal of a certain anthem, the ass being conducted into the nave of the church, the people mixed with the clergy danced around him, imitating his braying.

WILLIAM HONE in *Ancient Mysteries*

The Revel of Sir Hugonin de Guisay

MEMORABLE as an illustration of the manners of the French Court was a catastrophe that occurred in Paris in 1393. Riot and disorder had run wild all through the Christmas festivities. But the Court was not yet satisfied. Then Sir Hugonin de Guisay, most reckless among all the reckless spirits of the period, suggested that as an excuse for prolonging the merriment a marriage should be arranged between two of the court attendants. This was eagerly agreed upon. Sir Hugonin assumed the leadership, for which he was well fitted. He was loved and admired by the disorderly as much as he was hated and feared by the orderly. Among other pleasant traits, he was fond of exercising his wit upon tradesmen and mechanics, whom he would accost in the street, prick with his spurs, and compel to creep on all fours and bark like curs before he released them. Such traits endeared him to the courtiers of the young Most Gracious Majesty and Christian King of France. The marriage passed off in a blaze of glory and accompaniments of Gargantuan pleasantry. At the height of the ceremonies Sir Hugonin quietly withdrew with the king and four other wild ones,

scions of the noblest houses in France. With a pot of tar and a quantity of tow the six conspirators were speedily changed into a very fair imitation of the dancing bears then very common in mountebanks' booths. A mask completed the transformation. Five were then bound together with a silken rope. The sixth, the king himself, led them into the hall.

Their appearance created a general stir. "Who are they?" was the cry. Nobody knew. At this moment entered the wildest of all the wild Dukes of Orleans. "Who are they?" he echoed between hiccoughs. "Well, we'll soon find out." Seizing a brand from one of the torch bearers ranged around the wall, he staggered forward. Some gentlemen essayed to stay him. But he was obstinate and quarrelesome. Main force could not be thought of against a prince of the blood. He was given his way. He thrust his torch under the chin of the nearest of the maskers. The tow caught fire. In a moment the whole group was in flames. The young Duchess of Berri seized the king and enveloped him in her ample quilted robe. Thus he was saved. Another masker, the Lord of Nanthouillet, noted for strength and agility, rent the silken rope with a wrench of his strong teeth, pitched himself like a flaming comet through the first window, and dived into a cistern in the court, whence he emerged black and smoking, but almost unhurt. As for the other four, they whirled hither and thither through the horrified mob, struggling with one another, fighting with the flames, cursing, shrieking with pain. Women fainted by scores. Men who had never faltered in a hundred fights sickened at the hideous spectacle. All Paris was roused by the uproar, and gathered, an excited mob, about the palace.

At last the flames burnt out. The four maskers lay in a black and writhing heap upon the floor. One was a mere cinder. A second survived until daybreak. A third died at noon the next day. The fourth — none other than Sir Hugonin himself — survived for three days, while all Paris rejoiced over his agonies. "Bark, dog, bark," was the cry with which the citizens saluted his charred and mangled corpse, when it was at last borne to the grave.

W. S. WALSH in *Curiosities of Popular Customs*

Revels of the Inner Temple — Inns of Court

ON St. Stephen's Day, after the first course was served in, the constable marshal was wont to enter the hall (and we think he had much better have come in, and said all he had to say beforehand) bravely arrayed with "a fair rich compleat harneys, white and bright and gilt, with a nest of fethers, of all colours, upon his crest or helm, and a gilt pole ax in his hand," and, no doubt, thinking himself a prodigiously fine fellow. He was accompanied by the lieutenant of the Tower, "armed with a fair white armour," also wearing "fethers," and "with a pole ax in his hand," and of course also thinking himself a very fine fellow. With them came sixteen trumpeters, preceded by four drums and fifes, and attended by four men clad in white "harneys," from the middle upwards, having halberds in their hands, and bearing on their shoulders a model of the Tower, and each and every one of these latter personages, in his degree, having a consciousness that he, too, was a fine fellow. Then all these fine fellows, with the drums and music, and with all their "fethers" and finery, went three times round the fire, whereas, considering that the

boar's head was cooling all the time, we think once might have sufficed. Then the constable marshal, after three courtesies, knelt down before the Lord Chancellor, with the lieutenant doing the same behind him, and then and there deliberately proceeded to deliver himself of an "oration of a quarter of an hour's length," the purport of which was to tender his services to the Lord Chancellor, which, we think, at such a time, he might have contrived to do in fewer words. To this the Chancellor was unwise enough to reply that he would "take farther advice therein," when it would have been much better for him to settle the matter at once, and proceed to eat his dinner. However, this part of the ceremony ended at last by the constable marshal and the lieutenant obtaining seats at the Chancellor's table, upon the former giving up his sword; and then enter, for a similar purpose, the master of the game, apparelled in green velvet, and the ranger of the forest, in a green suit of "satten," bearing in his hand a green bow, and "divers" arrows, "with either of them a hunting-horn about their necks, blowing together three blasts of venery." These worthies, also, thought it necessary to parade their finery three times around the fire; and having then made similar obeisances, and offered up a similar petition in a similar posture, they were finally inducted into a similar privilege.

But though seated at the Chancellor's table, and no doubt sufficiently roused by the steam of its good things, they were far enough as yet from getting anything to eat, as a consequence; and the next ceremony is one which strikingly marks the rudeness of the times. "A huntsman cometh into the hall, with a fox, and a purse-net with a cat, both bound at the end of a staff, and with them nine or

ten couple of hounds, with the blowing of hunting-horns. And the fox and the cat are set upon by the hounds, and killed beneath the fire." "What this 'merry disport' signified (if practised) before the Reformation," says a writer in Mr. Hone's Year Book, "I know not. In 'Ane compendious boke of godly and spiritual songs, Edinburgh, 1621, printed from an old copy,' are the following lines, seemingly referring to some pageant: —

> 'The hunter is Christ that hunts in haist,
> The hunds are Peter and Pawle,
> The paip is the fox, Rome is the Rox
> That rubbis us on the gall.'"

After these ceremonies, the welcome permission to betake themselves to the far more interesting one of an attack upon the good things of the feast appears to have been at length given; but at the close of the second course the subject of receiving the officers who had tendered their Christmas service was renewed. Whether the gentlemen of the law were burlesquing their own profession intentionally or whether it was an awkward hit, like that which befell their brethren of Gray's Inn, does not appear. However the common serjeant made what is called "a plausible speech," insisting on the necessity of these officers "for the better reputation of the Commonwealth;" and he was followed, to the same effect, by the King's serjeant-at-law till the Lord Chancellor silenced them by desiring a respite of further advice, which it is greatly to be marvelled he had not done sooner.

And thereupon he called upon the "ancientest of the masters of the revels" for a song, — a proceeding to which we give our unqualified approbation.

T. K. Hervey

King Witlaf's Drinking-Horn

WITLAF, a king of the Saxons,
Ere yet his last he breathed,
To the merry monks of Croyland
His drinking-horn bequeathed, —

That, whenever they sat at their revels,
And drank from the golden bowl,
They might remember the donor,
And breathe a prayer for his soul.

So sat they once at Christmas,
And bade the goblet pass;
In their beards the red wine glistened
Like dew-drops in the grass.

They drank to the soul of Witlaf,
They drank to Christ the Lord,
And to each of the Twelve Apostles,
Who had preached His holy word.

They drank to the Saints and Martyrs
Of the dismal days of yore,
And as soon as the horn was empty
They remembered one Saint more.

And the reader droned from the pulpit,
Like the murmur of many bees,
The legend of good Saint Guthlac,
And Saint Basil's homilies;

Till the great bells of the convent,
From their prison in the tower,

Guthlac and Bartholomæus,
 Proclaimed the midnight hour.

And the Yule-log cracked in the chimney
 And the Abbot bowed his head,
And the flamelets flapped and flickered
 But the Abbot was stark and dead.

Yet still in his pallid fingers
 He clutched the golden bowl,
In which, like a pearl dissolving,
 Had sunk and dissolved his soul.

But not for this their revels
 The jovial monks forbore,
For they cried, "Fill high the goblet!
 We must drink to one Saint more."

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

Old Christmastide

HEAP on more wood! — the wind is chill;
 But let it whistle as it will,
We'll keep our Christmas merry still.
Each age has deemed the new-born year
The fittest time for festal cheer.
Even heathen yet, the savage Dane
At Iol more deep the mead did drain;
High on the beach his galley drew,
And feasted all his pirate crew;
Then in his low and pine-built hall,
Where shields and axes decked the wall,

They gorged upon the half-dressed steer;
Caroused in seas of sable beer;
While round, in brutal jest, were thrown
The half-gnawed rib and marrow-bone,
Or listened all, in grim delight,
While scalds yelled out the joy of fight,
Then forth in frenzy would they hie,
While wildly loose their red locks fly;
And, dancing round the blazing pile,
They make such barbarous mirth the while,
As best might to the mind recall
The boisterous joys of Odin's hall.
And well our Christian sires of old
Loved when the year its course had rolled,
And brought blithe Christmas back again,
With all his hospitable train.
Domestic and religious rite
Gave honour to the holy night:
On Christmas eve the bells were rung;
On Christmas eve the mass was sung;
That only night, in all the year,
Saw the stoled priest the chalice rear.
The damsel donned her kirtle sheen;
The hall was dressed with holly green;
Forth to the wood did merry men go,
To gather in the mistletoe;
Then opened wide the baron's hall
To vassal, tenant, serf, and all;
Power laid his rod of rule aside,
And ceremony doffed his pride.
The heir, with roses in his shoes,
That night might village partner choose;

The lord, underogating, share
The vulgar game of " post and pair."
All hailed, with uncontrolled delight,
And general voice, the happy night
That to the cottage, as the crown,
Brought tidings of salvation down.
The fire, with well-dried logs supplied,
Went roaring up the chimney wide;
The huge hall-table's oaken face,
Scrubbed till it shone, the day to grace,
Bore then upon its massive board
No mark to part the squire and lord.
Then was brought in the lusty brawn
By old blue-coated serving man;
Then the grim boar's head frowned on high,
Crested with bays and rosemary.
Well can the green-garbed ranger tell,
How, when, and where, the monster fell;
What dogs before his death he tore,
And all the baiting of the boar.
The Wassail round, in good brown bowls,
Garnished with ribbons, blithely trowls.
There the huge sirloin reeked; hard by
Plum-porridge stood, and Christmas pie;
Nor failed old Scotland to produce,
At such high tide, her savoury goose.
Then came the merry masquers in,
And carols roared with blithesome din;
If unmelodious was the song,
It was a hearty note, and strong,
Who lists may in their mumming see
Traces of ancient mystery;

White shirts supplied the masquerade,
And smutted cheeks the vizors made:
But, O! what masquers, richly dight,
Can boast of bosoms half so light!
England was merry England, when
Old Christmas brought his sports again.
'Twas Christmas broached the mightiest ale;
'Twas Christmas told the merriest tale;
A Christmas gambol oft could cheer
The poor man's heart through half the year.

SIR WALTER SCOTT

Christmas Games in "Old Wardle's" Kitchen

[According to annual custom, on Christmas eve, observed by old Wardle's forefathers from time immemorial.]

FROM the centre of the ceiling of this kitchen, old Wardle had just suspended with his own hands a huge branch of mistletoe, and this same branch of mistletoe instantaneously gave rise to a scene of general and most delightful struggling of confusion; in the midst of which Mr. Pickwick, with a gallantry which would have done honour to a descendant of Lady Tollimglower herself, took the old lady by the hand, led her beneath the mystic branch, and saluted her in all courtesy and decorum. The old lady submitted to this piece of practical politeness with all the dignity which befitted so important and serious a solemnity, but the younger ladies, not being so thoroughly imbued with a superstitious veneration of the custom, or imagining that the value of a salute is very much enhanced if it cost a little trouble to obtain it, screamed and struggled, and ran into corners, and threatened and remonstrated,

and did everything but leave the room, until some of the less adventurous gentlemen were on the point of desisting, when they all at once found it useless to resist any longer, and submitted to be kissed with a good grace. Mr. Winkle kissed the young lady with the black eyes, and Mr. Snodgrass kissed Emily; and Mr. Weller, not being particular about the form of being under the mistletoe, kissed Emma and the other female servants, just as he caught them. As to the poor relations, they kissed everybody, not even excepting the plainer portion of the young-lady visitors, who, in their excessive confusion, ran right under the mistletoe, directly it was hung up, without knowing it! Wardle stood with his back to the fire, surveying the whole scene with the utmost satisfaction; and the fat boy took the opportunity of appropriating to his own use, and summarily devouring, a particularly fine mince-pie, that had been carefully put by for somebody else.

Now the screaming had subsided, and faces were in a glow and curls in a tangle, and Mr. Pickwick, after kissing the old lady as before-mentioned, was standing under the mistletoe, looking with a very pleased countenance on all that was passing around him, when the young lady with the black eyes, after a little whispering with the other young ladies, made a sudden dart forward, and, putting her arm round Mr. Pickwick's neck, saluted him affectionately on the left cheek; and before Mr. Pickwick distinctly knew what was the matter, he was surrounded by the whole body, and kissed by every one of them.

It was a pleasant thing to see Mr. Pickwick in the centre of the group, now pulled this way, and then that, and first kissed on the chin and then on the nose, and then on the

spectacles, and to hear the peals of laughter which were raised on every side; but it was a still more pleasant thing to see Mr. Pickwick, blinded shortly afterwards with a silk-handkerchief, falling up against the wall, and scrambling into corners, and going through all the mysteries of blind-man's buff, with the utmost relish for the game, until at last he caught one of the poor relations; and then had to evade the blind-man himself, which he did with a nimbleness and agility that elicited the admiration and applause of all beholders. The poor relations caught just the people whom they thought would like it; and when the game flagged, got caught themselves. When they were all tired of blind-man's buff, there was a great game at snap-dragon, and when fingers enough were burned with that, and all the raisins gone, they sat down by the huge fire of blazing logs to a substantial supper, and a mighty bowl of wassail, something smaller than an ordinary wash-house copper, in which the hot apples were hissing and bubbling with a rich look, and a jolly sound, that were perfectly irresistible.

"This," said Mr. Pickwick, looking round him, "this is, indeed, comfort."

"Our invariable custom," replied Mr. Wardle. "Everybody sits down with us on Christmas eve, as you see them now — servants and all; and here we wait till the clock strikes twelve, to usher Christmas in, and wile away the time with forfeits and old stories. Trundle, my boy, rake up the fire."

Up flew the bright sparks in myriads as the logs were stirred, and the deep red blaze sent forth a rich glow, that penetrated into the furthest corner of the room, and cast its cheerful tint on every face.

"Come," said Wardle, "a song — a Christmas song. I'll give you one, in default of a better."

"Bravo," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Fill up," cried Wardle. "It will be two hours good before you see the bottom of the bowl through the deep rich colour of the wassail; fill up all round, and now for the song."

Thus saying, the merry old gentleman, in a good, round, sturdy voice, commenced without more ado —

A Christmas Carol

I care not for Spring; on his fickle wing
Let the blossoms and buds be borne:
He woos them amain with his treacherous rain,
And he scatters them ere the morn.
An inconstant elf, he knows not himself,
Or his own changing mind an hour,
He'll smile in your face, and with wry grimace,
He'll wither your youngest flower.

Let the Summer sun to his bright home run,
He shall never be sought by me;
When he's dimmed by a cloud I can laugh aloud,
And care not how sulky he be;
For his darling child is the madness wild
That sports in fierce fever's train;
And when love is too strong, it don't last long,
As many have found to their pain.

A mild harvest night, by the tranquil light
Of the modest and gentle moon,
Has a far sweeter sheen for me, I ween,
Than the broad and unblushing noon.
But every leaf awakens my grief,
As it lies beneath the tree;
So let Autumn air be never so fair,
It by no means agrees with me.

But my song I troll out, for Christmas stout,
The hearty, the true, and the bold;
A bumper I drain, and with might and main
Give three cheers for this Christmas old.
We'll usher him in with a merry din
That shall gladden his joyous heart,
And we'll keep him up while there's bite or sup,
And in fellowship good, we'll part.

In his fine honest pride, he scorns to hide
One jot of his hard-weather scars;
They're no disgrace, for there's much the same trace
On the cheeks of our bravest tars.
Then again I sing 'till the roof doth ring,
And it echoes from wall to wall —
To the stout old wight, fair welcome to-night,
As the King of the Seasons all!

This song was tumultuously applauded, for friends and dependents make a capital audience; and the poor relations especially were in perfect ecstasies of rapture. Again was the fire replenished, and again went the wassail round.

CHARLES DICKENS

A "Mystery" as performed in Mexico

AGAINST the wing-wall of the Hacienda del Mayo, which occupied one end of the plaza, was raised a platform, on which stood a table covered with scarlet cloth. A rude bower of cane-leaves, on one end of the platform, represented the manger of Bethlehem; while a cord, stretched from its top across the plaza to a hole in the front of the church, bore a large tinsel star, suspended by a hole in its centre. There was quite a crowd in the plaza, and very soon a procession ap-

peared, coming up from the lower part of the village. The three kings took the lead; the Virgin, mounted on an ass that gloried in a gilded saddle and rose-besprinkled mane and tail, followed them, led by the angel; and several women, with curious masks of paper, brought up the rear. Two characters, of the harlequin sort — one with a dog's head on his shoulders, and the other a bald-headed friar, with a huge hat hanging on his back — played all sorts of antics for the diversion of the crowd. After making the circuit of the plaza, the Virgin was taken to the platform, and entered the manger. King Herod took his seat at the scarlet table, with an attendant in blue coat and red sash, whom I took to be his Prime Minister. The three kings remained on their horses in front of the church; but between them and the platform, under the string on which the star was to slide, walked two men in long white robes and blue hoods, with parchment folios in their hands. These were the Wise Men of the East, as one might readily know from their solemn air, and the mysterious glances which they cast towards all quarters of the heavens.

In a little while, a company of women on the platform, concealed behind a curtain, sang an angelic chorus to the tune of 'Opescator dell' onda.' At the proper moment, the Magi turned towards the platform, followed by the star, to which a string was conveniently attached, that it might be slid along the line. The three kings followed the star till it reached the manger, when they dismounted, and inquired for the sovereign, whom it had led them to visit. They were invited upon the platform, and introduced to Herod, as the only king; this did not seem to satisfy them, and, after some conversation, they retired. By this time the star had receded to the other end of the line, and commenced



THE HOLY NIGHT. *Von Uhde.*

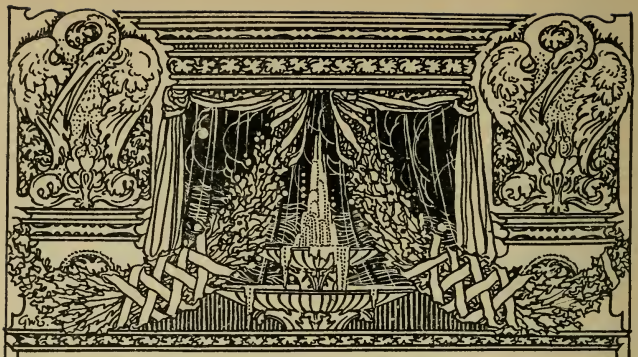
moving forward again, they following. The angel called them into the manger, where, upon their knees, they were shown a small wooden box, supposed to contain the sacred infant; they then retired, and the star brought them back no more. After this departure, King Herod declared himself greatly confused by what he had witnessed, and was very much afraid this newly found king would weaken his power. Upon consultation with his Prime Minister, the Massacre of the Innocents was decided upon, as the only means of security.

The angel, on hearing this, gave warning to the Virgin, who quickly got down from the platform, mounted her bespangled donkey, and hurried off. Herod's Prime Minister directed all the children to be handed up for execution. A boy, in a ragged sarape, was caught and thrust forward; the Minister took him by the heels in spite of his kicking, and held his head on the table. The little brother and sister of the boy, thinking he was really to be decapitated, yelled at the top of their voices, in an agony of terror, which threw the crowd into a roar of laughter. King Herod brought down his sword with a whack on the table, and the Prime Minister, dipping his brush into a pot of white paint which stood before him, made a flaring cross on the boy's face. Several other boys were caught and served likewise; and, finally, the two harlequins, whose kicks and struggles nearly shook down the platform. The procession then went off up the hill, followed by the whole population of the village. All the evening there were fandangoes in the méson, bonfires and rockets on the plaza, ringing of bells, and high mass in the church, with the accompaniment of two guitars, tinkling to lively polkas.

BAYARD TAYLOR in *Eldorado*

VIII

WHEN ALL THE WORLD IS KIN



WHEN ALL THE WORLD IS KIN

Christmas
Christmas Night of '62
Merry Christmas in the Tenements
Christmas at Sea
The First Christmas Tree in the Legation Compound, at Tokyo, Japan
Christmas in India
A Belgian Christmas Eve Procession
Christmas at the Cape
The "Good Night" in Spain
Christmas in Rome
Christmas in Burgundy
Christmas in Germany
Christmas Dinner in a Clipper's Fo'c'sle
Christmas in Jail
Colonel Carter's Christmas Tree


GEORGE HAMILTON EDWARDS

BUT Christmas is not only the mile-mark of another year, moving us to thoughts of self-examination, — it is a season, from all its associations, whether domestic or religious, suggesting thoughts of joy. A man dissatisfied with his endeavors is a man tempted to sadness. And in the midst of winter, when his life runs lowest and he is reminded of the empty chairs of his beloved, it is well that he should be condemned to this fashion of the smiling face.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Christmas Night of '62

THE wintry blast goes wailing by,
The snow is falling overhead;
I hear the lonely sentry's tread,
And distant watch-fires light the sky.

Dim forms go flitting through the gloom;
The soldiers cluster round the blaze
To talk of other Christmas days,
And softly speak of home and home.

My sabre swinging overhead,
Gleams in the watch-fire's fitful glow,
While fiercely drives the blinding snow,
And memory leads me to the dead.

My thoughts go wandering to and fro,
Vibrating 'twixt the Now and Then;
I see the low-browed home agen,
The old hall wreathed with mistletoe.

And sweetly from the far off years
Comes borne the laughter faint and low,
The voices of the Long Ago!
My eyes are wet with tender tears.

I feel agen the mother kiss,
I see agen the glad surprise
That lighted up the tranquil eyes
And brimmed them o'er with tears of bliss,

As, rushing from the old hall-door,
She fondly clasped her wayward boy —
Her face all radiant with the joy
She felt to see him home once more.

My sabre swinging on the bough
Gleams in the watch-fire's fitful glow,
While fiercely drives the blinding snow
Aslant upon my saddened brow.

Those cherished faces all are gone!
Asleep within the quiet graves
Where lies the snow in drifting waves, —
And I am sitting here alone.

There's not a comrade here to-night
But knows that loved ones far away
On bended knees this night will pray:
" God bring our darling from the fight."

But there are none to wish me back,
For me no yearning prayers arise.
The lips are mute and closed the eyes —
My home is in the bivouac.

In the Army of Northern Virginia.

WILLIAM G. McCABE

Quoted from W. P. Trent's *Southern Writers*

Merry Christmas in the Tenements

IT was just a sprig of holly, with scarlet berries showing against the green, stuck in, by one of the office boys probably, behind the sign that pointed the way up to the editorial

rooms. There was no reason why it should have made me start when I came suddenly upon it at the turn of the stairs; but it did. Perhaps it was because that dingy hall, given over to dust and draughts all the days of the year, was the last place in which I expected to meet with any sign of Christmas; perhaps it was because I myself had nearly forgotten the holiday. Whatever the cause, it gave me quite a turn.

I stood, and stared at it. It looked dry, almost withered. Probably it had come a long way. Not much holly grows about Printing-House Square, except in the colored supplements, and that is scarcely of a kind to stir tender memories. Withered and dry, this did. I thought, with a twinge of conscience, of secret little conclaves of my children, of private views of things hidden from mamma at the bottom of drawers, of wild flights when papa appeared unbidden in the door, which I had allowed for once to pass unheeded. Absorbed in the business of the office, I had hardly thought of Christmas coming on, until now it was here. And this sprig of holly on the wall that had come to remind me, — come nobody knew how far, — did it grow yet in the beech-wood clearings, as it did when I gathered it as a boy, tracking through the snow? "Christ-thorn" we called it in our Danish tongue. The red berries, to our simple faith, were the drops of blood that fell from the Saviour's brow as it dropped under its cruel crown upon the cross. . . .

* * * * * * *

The lights of the Bowery glow like a myriad twinkling stars upon the ceaseless flood of humanity that surges ever through the great highway of the homeless. They shine upon long rows of lodging-houses, in which hundreds of young men, cast helpless upon the reef of the strange

city, are learning their first lessons of utter loneliness; for what desolation is there like that of the careless crowd when all the world rejoices? They shine upon the tempter setting his snares there, and upon the missionary and the Salvation Army lass, disputing his catch with him; upon the police detective going his rounds with coldly observant eye intent upon the outcome of the contest; upon the wreck that is past hope, and upon the youth pausing on the verge of the pit in which the other has long ceased to struggle. Sights and sounds of Christmas there are in plenty in the Bowery. Balsam and hemlock and fir stand in groves along the busy thoroughfare, and garlands of green embower mission and dive impartially. Once a year the old street recalls its youth with an effort. It is true that it is largely a commercial effort; that the evergreen, with an instinct that is not of its native hills, haunts saloon-corners by preference; but the smell of the pine woods is in the air, and — Christmas is not too critical — one is grateful for the effort. It varies with the opportunity. At "Beefsteak John's" it is content with artistically embalming crullers and mince-pies in green cabbage under the window lamp. Over yonder, where the mile-post of the old lane still stands, — in its unhonored old age become the vehicle of publishing the latest "sure cure" to the world, — a florist, whose undenominational zeal for the holiday and trade outstrips alike distinction of creed and property, has transformed the sidewalk and the ugly railroad structure into a veritable bower, spanning it with a canopy of green, under which dwell with him, in neighborly good-will, the Young Men's Christian Association and the Jewish tailor next door. . . .

Down at the foot of the Bowery is the "panhandlers' beat," where the saloons elbow one another at every step,

crowding out all other business than that of keeping lodgers to support them. Within call of it, across the square, stands a church which, in the memory of men yet living, was built to shelter the fashionable Baptist audiences of a day when Madison Square was out in the fields, and Harlem had a foreign sound. The fashionable audiences are gone long since. To-day the church, fallen into premature decay, but still handsome in its strong and noble lines, stands as a missionary outpost in the land of the enemy, its builders would have said, doing a greater work than they planned. To-night is the Christmas festival of its English-speaking Sunday-school, and the pews are filled. The banners of United Italy, of modern Hellas, of France and Germany and England, hang side by side with the Chinese dragon and the starry flag-signs of the cosmopolitan character of the congregation. Greek and Roman Catholics, Jews and joss-worshippers, go there; few Protestants, and no Baptists. It is easy to pick out the children in their seats by nationality, and as easy to read the story of poverty and suffering that stands written in more than one mother's haggard face, now beaming with pleasure at the little ones' glee. A gayly decorated Christmas tree has taken the place of the pulpit. At its foot is stacked a mountain of bundles, Santa Claus's gifts to the school. A self-conscious young man with soap-locks had just been allowed to retire, amid tumultuous applause, after blowing "Nearer, my God, to Thee" on his horn until his cheeks swelled almost to bursting. A trumpet ever takes the Fourth Ward by storm. A class of little girls is climbing upon the platform. Each wears a capital letter on her breast, and together they spell its lesson. There is momentary consternation: one is missing. As the discovery is made, a child pushes past the doorkeeper, hot and

breathless. "I am in 'Boundless Love,'" she says, and makes for the platform, where her arrival restores confidence and the language.

In the audience the befrocked visitor from up-town sits cheek by jowl with the pigtailed Chinaman and the dark-browed Italian. Up in the gallery, farthest from the preacher's desk and the tree, sits a Jewish mother with three boys, almost in rags. A dingy and threadbare shawl partly hides her poor calico wrap and patched apron. The woman shrinks in the pew, fearful of being seen; her boys stand upon the benches, and applaud with the rest. She endeavors vainly to restrain them. "Tick, tick!" goes the old clock over the door through which wealth and fashion went out long years ago, and poverty came in. . . .

Within hail of the Sullivan Street school camps a scattered little band, the Christmas customs of which I had been trying for years to surprise. They are Indians, a handful of Mohawks and Iroquois, whom some ill wind has blown down from their Canadian reservation, and left in these West Side tenements to eke out such a living as they can, weaving mats and baskets, and threading glass pearls on slippers and pin-cushions, until one after another they have died off and gone to happier hunting-grounds than Thompson Street. There were as many families as one could count on the fingers of both hands when I first came upon them, at the death of old Tamenund, the basket maker. Last Christmas there were seven. I had about made up my mind that the only real Americans in New York did not keep the holiday at all, when one Christmas eve they showed me how. Just as dark was setting in, old Mrs. Benoit came from her Hudson Street attic — where she was known among the neighbors, as old and poor as she, as Mrs.

Ben Wah, and was believed to be the relict of a warrior of the name of Benjamin Wah — to the office of the Charity Organization Society, with a bundle for a friend who had helped her over a rough spot — the rent, I suppose. The bundle was done up elaborately in blue cheese-cloth, and contained a lot of little garments which she had made out of the remnants of blankets and cloth of her own from a younger and better day. "For those," she said, in her French patois, "who are poorer than myself;" and hobbled away. I found out, a few days later, when I took her picture weaving mats in the attic room, that she had scarcely food in the house that Christmas day and not the car fare to take her to church! Walking was bad, and her old limbs were stiff. She sat by the window through the winter evening and watched the sun go down behind the western hills, comforted by her pipe. Mrs. Ben Wah, to give her her local name, is not really an Indian; but her husband was one, and she lived all her life with the tribe till she came here. She is a philosopher in her own quaint way. "It is no disgrace to be poor," said she to me, regarding her empty tobacco-pouch; "but it is sometimes a great inconvenience." Not even the recollection of the vote of censure that was passed upon me once by the ladies of the Charitable Ten for surreptitiously supplying an aged couple, the special object of their charity, with army plug, could have deterred me from taking the hint. . . .

In a hundred places all over the city, when Christmas comes, as many open-air fairs spring suddenly into life. A kind of Gentile Feast of Tabernacles possesses the tenement districts especially. Green-embowered booths stand in rows at the curb, and the voice of the tin trumpet is heard in the land. The common source of all the show is down

by the North River, in the district known as "the Farm." Down there Santa Claus establishes headquarters early in December and until past New Year. The broad quay looks then more like a clearing in a pine forest than a busy section of the metropolis. The steamers discharge their loads of fir trees at the piers until they stand stacked mountain high, with foot-hills of holly and ground-ivy trailing off toward the land side. An army train of wagons is engaged in carting them away from early morning till late at night; but the green forest grows, in spite of it all, until in places it shuts the shipping out of sight altogether. The air is redolent with the smell of balsam and pine. After nightfall, when the lights are burning in the busy market, and the homeward-bound crowds with baskets and heavy burdens of Christmas greens jostle one another with good-natured banter, — nobody is ever cross down here in the holiday season, — it is good to take a stroll through the Farm, if one has a spot in his heart faithful yet to the hills and the woods in spite of the latter-day city. But it is when the moonlight is upon the water and upon the dark phantom forest, when the heavy breathing of some passing steamer is the only sound that breaks the stillness of the night, and the watchman smokes his only pipe on the bulwark, that the Farm has a mood and an atmosphere all its own, full of poetry which some day a painter's brush will catch and hold. . . .

Farthest down town, where the island narrows toward the Battery, and warehouses crowd the few remaining tenements, the sombre-hued colony of Syrians is astir with preparation for the holiday. How comes it that in the only settlement of the real Christmas people in New York the corner saloon appropriates to itself all the outward signs of it? Even the floral cross that is nailed over the door

of the Orthodox church is long withered and dead; it has been there since Easter, and it is yet twelve days to Christmas by the belated reckoning of the Greek Church. But if the houses show no sign of the holiday, within there is nothing lacking. The whole colony is gone a-visiting. There are enough of the unorthodox to set the fashion, and the rest follow the custom of the country. The men go from house to house, laugh, shake hands, and kiss one another on both cheeks, with the salutation, "Kol am va antom Salimoon." "Every year and you are safe," the Syrian guide renders it into English; and a non-professional interpreter amends it: "May you grow happier year by year." Arrack made from grapes and flavored with aniseseed, and candy baked in little white balls like marbles, are served with the indispensable cigarette; for long callers, the pipe. . . .

The bells in old Trinity chime the midnight hour. From dark hallways men and women pour forth and hasten to the Maronite church. In the loft of the dingy old warehouse wax candles burn before an altar of brass. The priest, in a white robe with a huge gold cross worked on the back, chants the ritual. The people respond. The women kneel in the aisles, shrouding their heads in their shawls; a surpliced acolyte swings his censer; the heavy perfume of burning incense fills the hall.

The band at the anarchists' ball is tuning up for the last dance. Young and old float to the happy strains, forgetting injustice, oppression, hatred. Children slide upon the waxed floor, weaving fearlessly in and out between couples — between fierce, bearded men and short-haired women with crimson-bordered kerchiefs. A Punch-and-Judy show in the corner evokes shouts of laughter.

Outside the snow is falling. It sifts silently into each nook and corner, softens all the hard and ugly lines, and throws the spotless mantle of charity over the blemishes, the shortcomings. Christmas morning will dawn pure and white.

JACOB RIIS in *Children of the Tenements* (abridged)

Christmas at Sea

THE sheets were frozen hard, and they cut the naked hand;
The decks were like a slide, where a seaman scarce could stand;
The wind was a nor'wester, blowing squally off the sea,
And the cliffs and spouting breakers were the only thing a-lee.

We heard the surf a-roaring before the break of day,
But 'twas only with the peep of light we saw how ill we lay.
We tumbled every hand on deck, instanter, with a shout,
And we gave her the maintops'l, and stood by to go about.

All day we tacked and tacked between the South Head and the North;
All day we hauled the frozen sheets and got no further forth;
All day as cold as charity, in bitter pain and dread,
For very life and nature we tacked from head to head.

We gave the South a wider berth, for there the tide-race roared;
But every tack we made we brought the North Head close aboard:

So's we saw the cliffs and houses, and the breakers running
high,
And the coast-guard in his garden, with his glass against his
eye.

The frost was on the village roofs as white as ocean foam;
The good red fires were burning bright in every 'longshore
home;
The windows sparkled clear, and the chimneys volleyed out,
And I vow we sniffed the victuals as the vessel went about.

The bells upon the church were rung with a mighty jovial
cheer,
For it's just that I should tell you how (of all days in the
year)
This day of our adversity was blessed Christmas morn,
And the house above the coast-guard's was the house where
I was born.

O well I saw the pleasant room, the pleasant faces there,
My mother's silver spectacles, my father's silver hair;
And well I saw the firelight, like a flight of homely elves,
Go dancing round the china-plates that stand upon the
shelves.

And well I know the talk they had, the talk that was of
me,
Of the shadow on the household and the son that went to
sea;
And O a wicked fool I seemed, in every kind of way,
To be here and hauling frozen ropes on blessed Christmas
day!

They lit the high sea-light, and the dark began to fall.
"All hands to loose top-gallant sails," I heard the captain call.
"By the Lord, she'll never stand it," our first mate, Jackson, cried.
"It's the one way or the other, Mr. Jackson," he replied.

She staggered to her bearings, but the sails were new and good,
And the ship smelt up to windward just as though she understood.
As the winter's day was ending, in the entry of the night,
We cleared the weary headland and passed below the light.

And they heaved a mighty breath, every soul on board but me,
As they saw her nose again pointing handsome out to sea;
But all that I could think of, in the darkness and the cold,
Was just that I was leaving home and my folks were growing old.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

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The First Christmas Tree in the Legation Compound at Tokyo, Japan

A HUGE Christmas tree, the first that had ever grown in our compound, for the children of our servants and writers and employés, who make up the number of our Legation population to close on two hundred, beginning

with H——, and ending with the last jinriksha coolie's youngest baby. I could not have the tree on Christmas Day, owing to various engagements; so it was fixed for January 3d, and was quite the most successful entertainment I ever gave!

When I undertook it, I confess that I had no idea how many little ones belonged to the compound. I sent our good Ogita round to invite them all solemnly to come to Ichiban (Number One) on the 3d at five o'clock. Ogita threw himself into the business with delighted goodwill, having five little people of his own to include in the invitation; but all the servants were eager to help as soon as they knew we were preparing a treat for the children. That is work which would always appeal to Japanese of any age or class. No trouble is too great, if it brings pleasure to the "treasure flowers," as the babies are called. I am still too ignorant of their special tastes to trust my own judgment in the matter of presents; so Mr. G—— left the dictionary and the Chancery for two or three afternoons, and helped me to collect an appropriate harvest for the little hands to glean. Some of them were not little, and these were more difficult to buy for; but after many cold hours passed in the different bazaars, it seemed to me that there must be something for everybody, although we had really spent very little money.

The wares were so quaint and pretty that it was a pleasure to sort and handle them. There were workboxes in beautiful polished woods, with drawers fitting so perfectly that when you closed one the compressed air at once shot out another. There were mirrors enclosed in charming embroidered cases; for where mirrors are mostly made of metal, people learn not to let them get scratched. There were dollies of every size, and dolls' houses and furniture,

kitchens, farmyards, rice-pounding machines — all made in the tiniest proportions, such as it seemed no human fingers could really have handled. For the elder boys we bought books, school-boxes with every school requisite contained in a square the size of one's hand, and pen-knives and scissors, which are greatly prized as being of foreign manufacture. For decorations we had an abundant choice of materials. I got forests of willow branches decorated with artificial fruits; pink and white balls made of rice paste, which are threaded on the twigs; surprise shells of the same paste, two lightly stuck together in the form of a double scallop shell, and full of miniature toys; kanzashi, or ornamental hairpins for the girls, made flowers of gold and silver among my dark pine branches; and I wasted precious minutes in opening and shutting these dainty roses — buds until you press a spring, when they open suddenly into a full-blown rose. But the most beautiful things on my tree were the icicles, which hung in scores from its sombre foliage, catching rosy gleams of light from our lamps as we worked late into the night. These were — chopsticks, long glass chopsticks, which I discovered in the bazaar; and I am sure Santa Klaus himself could not have told them from icicles. Of course every present must be labelled with a child's name, and here my troubles began. Ogita was told to make out a correct list of names and ages, with some reference to the calling of the parents; for even here rank and precedence must be observed, or terrible heart-burnings might follow. The list came at last; and if it were not so long, I would send it to you complete, for it was a curiosity. Imagine such complicated titles as these: "Minister's second cook's girl. Umé, age 2; Minister's servant's cousin's boy. Age 11";

"Student interpreter's teacher's girl"; "Vice-Consul's jinriksha-man's boy." And so it went on, till there were fifty-eight of them of all ages, from one year up to nineteen. Some of them, indeed, were less than a year old; and I was amused on the evening of the 2d at having the list brought back to me with this note (Ogita's English is still highly individual!): "Marked X is declined to the invitation." On looking down the column, I found that ominous-looking cross only against one name, that of Yasu, daughter of Ito Kanejiro, Mr. G——'s cook. This recalcitrant little person turned out to be six weeks old — an early age for parties even nowadays. Miss Yasu, having been born in November, was put down in the following January as two years old, after the puzzling Japanese fashion. Then I found that they would write boys as girls, girls as boys, grown-ups as babies, and so on. Even at the last moment a doll had to be turned into a sword, a toy tea-set into a workbox, a history of Europe into a rattle; but people who grow Christmas trees are prepared for such small contingencies, and no one knew anything about it when on Friday afternoon the great tree slowly glowed into a pyramid of light, and a long procession of little Japs was marshalled in, with great solemnity and many bows, till they stood, a delighted, wide-eyed crowd, round the beautiful shining thing, the first Christmas tree any one of them had ever seen. It was worth all the trouble, to see the gasp of surprise and delight, the evident fear that the whole thing might be unreal and suddenly fade away. One little man of two fell flat on his back with amazement, tried to rise and have another look, and in so doing rolled over on his nose, where he lay quite silent till his relatives rescued him. Behind the children stood the mothers, quite as pleased as they, and with them

one very old lady with a little child on her back. She turned out to be the Vice-Consul's jinriksha-man's grandmother; the wife of that functionary was dead, and the old lady had to take her place in carrying about the poor little V. C. J. R. S. M.'s boy baby.

The children stood, the little ones in front and the taller ones behind, in a semicircle, and the many lights showed their bright faces and gorgeous costumes, for no one would be outdone by another in smartness — I fancy the poorer women had borrowed from richer neighbours — and the result was picturesque in the extreme. The older girls had their heads beautifully dressed, with flowers and pins and rolls of scarlet crape knotted in between the coils; their dresses were pale green or blue, with bright linings and stiff silk obis; but the little ones were a blaze of scarlet, green, geranium pink, and orange, their long sleeves sweeping the ground, and the huge flower patterns of their garments making them look like live flowers as they moved about on the dark velvet carpet. When they had gazed their fill, they were called up to me one by one, Ogita addressing them all as "San" (Miss or Mr.), even if they could only toddle, and I gave them their serious presents with their names, written in Japanese and English, tied on with red ribbon — an attention which, as I was afterwards told, they appreciated greatly. It seemed to me that they never would end; their size varied from a wee mite who could not carry its own toys to a tall handsome student of sixteen, or a gorgeous young lady in green and mauve crape and a head that must have taken the best part of a day to dress.

In one thing they were all alike: their manners were perfect. There was no pushing or grasping, no glances of envy at what other children received, no false shyness in

their sweet happy way of expressing their thanks. I had for my helpers two somewhat antagonistic volunteers — Sir Edwin Arnold, basking in Buddhistic calms, and Bishop Bickersteth, intensely Anglican, severe-looking, ascetic. There had already been some polite theological encounters at our table, and I did not feel sure that the combination would prove a happy one. But each man is a wonder of kind-heartedness in his own way; and my doubts were replaced by sunshiny certainties, when I saw how they both began by beaming at the children, and ended by beaming on one another. I was puzzled by one thing about the children: although we kept giving them sweets and oranges off the tree, every time I looked round the big circle all were empty-handed again, and it really seemed as if they must have swallowed the gifts, gold paper and ribbon and all. But at last I noticed that their square hanging sleeves began to have a strange lumpy appearance, like a conjurer's waistcoat just before he produces twenty-four bowls of live goldfish from his internal economy; and then I understood that the plunder was at once dropped into these great sleeves so as to leave hands free for anything else that Okusama might think good to bestow. One little lady, O'Haru San, aged three, got so overloaded with goodies and toys that they kept rolling out of her sleeves, to the great delight of the Brown Ambassador Dachshund, Tip, who pounced on them like lightning, and was also convicted of nibbling at cakes on the lower branches of the tree.

The bigger children would not take second editions of presents, and answered, "Honourable thanks, I have!" if offered more than they thought their share; but babies are babies all the world over! When the distribution was finished at last, I got a Japanese gentleman to tell them

the story of Christmas, the children's feast; and then they came up one by one to say "Sayonara" ("Since it must be," the Japanese farewell), and "Arigato gozaimasu" ("The honourable thanks").

"Come back next year," I said; and then the last presents were given out — beautiful lanterns, red, lighted, and hung on what Ogita calls bumboos, to light the guests home with. One tiny maiden refused to go, and flung herself on the floor in a passion of weeping, saying that Okusama's house was too beautiful to leave, and she would stay with me always — yes, she would! Only the sight of the lighted lantern, bobbing on a stick twice as long as herself, persuaded her to return to her own home in the servants' quarters. I stood on the step, the same step where I had set the fireflies free one warm night last summer, and watched the little people scatter over the lawns, and disappear into the dark shrubberies, their round red lights dancing and shifting as they went, just as if my fireflies had come back, on red wings this time, to light my little friends to bed.

MARY CRAWFORD FRASER

Christmas in India

DIM dawn behind the tamarisks — the sky is saffron-yellow —
As the women in the village grind the corn,
And the parrots seek the river-side, each calling to his fellow
That the Day, the staring Eastern Day is born.
Oh the white dust on the highway! Oh the stenches in the byway!

Oh the clammy fog that hovers over earth!
And at Home they're making merry 'neath the white and scarlet berry —
What part have India's exiles in their mirth?

Full day behind the tamarisks — the sky is blue and staring —
As the cattle crawl afield beneath the yoke,
And they bear One o'er the field-path, who is past all hope or caring
To the ghat below the curling wreaths of smoke.
Call on Rama, going slowly, as ye bear a brother lowly —
Call on Rama — he may hear, perhaps, your voice!
With our hymn-books and our Psalters we appeal to other altars
And to-day we bid "good Christian men rejoice!"

High noon behind the tamarisks — the sun is hot above us —
As at Home the Christmas Day is breaking wan.
They will drink our healths at dinner — those who tell us how they love us,
And forget us till another year be gone!
Oh the toil that needs no breaking! Oh the Heimweh, ceaseless, aching!
Oh the black dividing Sea and alien Plain!
Youth was cheap — wherefore we sold it. Gold was good — we hoped to hold it,
And to-day we know the fulness of our gain.

Gray dusk behind the tamarisks — the parrots fly together —
As the sun is sinking slowly over Home;

And his last ray seems to mock us shackled in a lifelong tether
That drags us back howe'er so far we roam.
Hard her service, poor her payment — she in ancient, tattered raiment —
India, she the grim Stepmother of our kind.
If the year of life be lent her, if her temple's shrine we enter,
The door is shut — we may not look behind.

Black night behind the tamarisks — the owls begin their chorus —
As the conches from the temples cream and bray.
With the fruitless years behind us, and the hopeless years before us,
Let us honor, O my brothers, Christmas Day!
Call a truce, then, to our labors — let us feast with friends and neighbors,
And be merry as the custom of our caste;
For if "faint and forced the laughter," and if sadness follow after,
We are richer by one mocking Christmas past.

RUDYARD KIPLING

By permission of the author and Messrs. Methuen & Co.

A Belgian Christmas Eve Procession

A CERTAIN stir and bustle in the street evidently portended some important event. Spectators, market-women; workmen and bloused peasants, homeward bound with baskets emptied of eggs, chickens and shapeless lumps of butter, began to congregate, mingling with some score

or so of that minor bourgeoisie that lives frugally on its modest income and having overmuch leisure is greedy for a sight of any street spectacle. There were idle troopers too belonging to the cavalry, whose trumpets rang out shrilly ever and anon from the barracks hard by; while a milk-woman on her rounds, with glittering brass cans in the little green cart that her sturdy mastiff with his brass-studded harness and red worsted tassels drew so easily, forgot her customers as she secured for herself a place in the foremost rank. Then children suddenly appeared, basket-laden, strewing the street with flowers and cut fragments of colored paper until the rough paving-stones all but disappeared beneath an irregular mosaic of red and green and blue. The bells of neighboring churches sent forth with common accord a joyous peal which was echoed by those of a monastery on the farther side of my hotel, and through the gate of which I had often seen the poor — such beggars as Sterne depicted — going in for their daily dole of bread and soup. From afar came the boom and clang of music, blended with the deep rich notes of chanting, as the head of a procession came in sight.

It was difficult to believe that the town could have contained so many girls — young, well dressed and pretty, as had been, by ecclesiastical influence, or by social considerations, induced to walk in that procession. They were of all ages, from the lisping child ill at ease in her starched frock and white shoes, to the tall maiden, carrying a heavy flag with the air of a Joan of Arc; but there they were — squadrons of girls in white; bevies of girls in blue; companies of girls in pink or lilac or maize color; all either actually bearing some emblem or badge, or feigning to assist the progress of some shrine or reliquary, or colossal

crucifix, or group of images, by grasping the end of one of the hundreds of bright ribbons that were attached to these the central features and rallying points of the show. On, on they streamed, walking demurely to the musical bassoon and serpent cornet and drum, of clashing cymbal and piping clarionet, while the musicians, collected from many a parish of city and suburbs, beat and blew their best. Anon the music was hushed, and nothing broke the silence save the deep voices of the chanting priests, and then arose the shrill singing of many children as school after school, well drilled and officered by nuns or friars, as the case might be, — marched on to swell the apparently interminable array.

A marvellous effect was there of color and grouping, and a rare display too of treasures ecclesiastic that seldom see the light of day. There is nothing now in the market, were an empress the bidder, to equal that old point lace just drawn forth from the oaken chest in which it usually reposes, and which was the pious work of supple fingers that crumbled to dust two centuries ago. Where can you find such goldsmith's work as yonder casket, that in bygone ages was consecrated as the receptacle of some wonder-working relic; or see such a triumph of art as that jewelled chalice, the repoussé work of which was surely wrought by fairy hammers, so light and delicate is the tracery?

. . . On, and onwards still, as if the whole feminine population of the kingdom — between the ages of seven, say, and seven-and-twenty — had been pressed into the service, swept the procession. Fresh bands of music, new companies of chanting priests, of deep-voiced deacons whose scarlet robes were all but hidden by costly lace,

awakened the echoes of the quiet streets. Chariots with bleeding hearts conspicuously borne aloft; chariots with gigantic crucifixes; chariots resplendent as the sun, with lavish display of cloth of gold, and tenanted by venerated images, went lumbering by.

And still the children sang and the diapason of the chanting rolled out like solemn thunder on the air, while at every instant some novel feature of the ever varying spectacle claimed its meed of praise. Prettiest, perhaps, of all the sights there was a little — a very little — child, a beautiful boy with golden curls, fantastically clad in raiment of camel's hair, who carried a tiny cross and led by a blue ribbon a white lamb, highly trained, no doubt, since it followed with perfect docility and exemplary meekness. A more charming model of innocent infancy than this youthful representative of John the Baptist, as with filleted head, small limbs seemingly bare, and blue eyes that never wandered to the right or left, he slowly stepped on, none of the great Italian masters ever drew. . . .

The spectators, I noticed, behaved very variously. There were *esprit forts* clearly among the bourgeoisie looking on, who seemed coldly indifferent to what they saw, if not actually hostile, and who declined to doff their hats as the holiest images and the most hallowed emblems were borne by. But the peasants one and all bared their heads in reverence; and the milk-woman, with her cart and her cans, had pulled her rosary, with its dark beads and brass medals, out of her capacious pocket and was telling her beads as devoutly as her own great-grandmother could have done.

Some rivalry there may possibly have been between the different parishes which had sent forth their boys and girls,

their bands and flags, and the jealously guarded treasures from crypt and chancel and sacristy to swell the pomp — Saint Jossé, with its famed old church, to which pilgrims resort even from the banks of Loire and Rhine, could not permit itself to be outshone by fashionable Saint Jacques, where it is easy for a bland abbé, who knows the world of the salons, to collect subscriptions that are less missed by the givers than a lost bet on the races, or a luckless stake at baccarat. And Saint Ursula, grim patroness of a network of ancient streets, where aristocratic mansions of the mediæval type are elbowed by mean shops and hucksters' stalls, yet tries to avoid the disgrace of being overcrowded by moneyed, pushing parvenu All Saints, where tall new houses, radiant with terra cotta and plate glass, shelter the rich proprietors of the still taller brick chimneys that dominate a mass of workmen's dwellings on the outskirts of the parish. But such a spirit of emulation only serves to enhance the glitter of the show.

And now the clashing cymbals, and the boom and bray of the brass instruments lately at their loudest, are hushed, that the rich thunder of the chanting may be the better heard, and the spectators press forward, or stand on tiptoe, to peer over the shoulders of those in the foremost rank. Something was plainly to be looked for that was regarded as the central pivot, or kernel, of the show. And here it comes, — surrounded by chanting priests, and preceded by scarlet capped and white robed acolytes swinging weighty censers, under his canopy of state borne over his head by four stronger men, some dignitary of the Church goes by. He wears no mitre — not even that of a bishop *in partibus infidelium* — and therefore I conjecture him to be a dean. He is at any rate splendid as jewels, and gold embroider-

ies, and antique lace can make him; and he walks beneath his gorgeous baldaquin of gold and purple, chanting too, but in a thin reedy voice, for he is old, and his hair, silver white, contrasts somewhat plaintively with the magnificence that environs him as amidst clouds of steaming incense he totters on. The bystanders begin to disperse, for it is getting late and cold, and the shadows are beginning to creep from darkling nooks and corners, and the spectacle is over. The procession is out of sight, and fainter grow the sounds of the music and of the chanting. The last spectator to depart was a young monk, with a pale face and dreamy eyes, clad in the brown robes of his order, who during all this time had knelt on the cold stones at the monastery gate, his lips moving as his lean fingers grasped his rosary, and an expression of rapt devotion on his wan countenance, that would have done credit to some hermit saint of a thousand years ago when the crown of martyrdom was easy to find.

From *All the Year Round*

Christmas at the Cape

YOUR Christmas comes with holly leaves
And snow about your doors and eaves;
Our lighted windows, open wide,
Let in our summer Christmas tide;
And where the drifting moths may go —
Behold our tiny flakes of snow;

But carol, carol in the cold;
And carol, carol as ye may, —
We sing the merry songs of old
As merrily on Christmas Day.

Your hills are wrapped in rainy cloud,
Your sea in anger roars aloud;
But here our hills are veiled with haze
In harmonies of blues and grays;
The waters of two oceans meet
With friendly murmurs by our feet;

But carol, carol, Christmas Waits,
And carol, carol, as ye may, —
The Crickets by our doors and gates
Sing in the grace of Christmas Day.

The rain and sunshine of the Cape
Lie folded in the ripening grape,
And Stellenbosch and Drakenstein,
With bounteous orchard, field of vine,
And every spot that we pass by —
Lie burnished 'neath our Christmas sky;

So carol, carol in your snow
And carol, carol as ye may, —
We carol 'mid our blooms ablow,
The grace of Summer's Christmas Day.

JOHN RUNCIE

The "Good Night" in Spain

WHO is he that has seen a Nativity and has not felt it? Who has not found himself in his own home, in his own domain, there in that fantastic world of cork and gummed paper, with its shadowy caves, where a saintly anchorite prays before a crucifix — sweet and simple anachronism, like that of the hunter who in a thicket of rose-



THE HOLY FAMILY WITH THE SHEPHERDS. *Titian.*

mary shrubs aims his gun at a partridge large as a stork perched on the tower of a hermitage, or that of the smuggler with his Spanish cloak and slouch hat, who with a load of tobacco hides behind a paper rock to give free passage to the three kings journeying in all their glory along the lofty summits of those cork Alps? Who does not feel an inexplicable pleasure at seeing that little donkey, laden with firewood, passing over a proud bridge of paper stone? And that meadow of milled green baize in which feed so tranquilly those little white lambs! Does not that hoar frost so well imitated with steel filings turn you cold? Do you not take comfort in the heat of that ruddy bonfire which the shepherds are kindling to warm the Holy Child? Who is not startled to discover, under the strips of glass which represent so well a frozen river, the fish, the tortoises, the crabs, reposing with all ease upon a bed of golden sand and swollen to dimensions unknown to naturalists? Here is a crab under whose claws can pass an eel, his neighbor, as under the arch of a bridge. Here is a colossal rat regarding with a bullying air a diminutive and peaceful kitten. Over yonder a donkey is disputing with a rabbit about the respective magnificence of their ears, which are, in fact, of the same size, and a bull is holding a similar discussion, on the subject of horns, with a snail, while a stout duck refuses to yield the honors to a rickety swan. And these birds of all colors, gladdening that profound forest of little evergreens which forms the background of this enchanting scene, would you not think that they had gathered here from the four quarters of the earth? Does it not make you happy to see the shepherds dance? And, above all, do you not adore with tender reverence the Divine Mystery contained in that humble porch with its thatch of

straw and, in its depths, a halo or glory of light? I say it frankly, — on that holy and merry Christmas Eve, all these things seem to me to live and feel; these little figures of clay, shaped by clumsy hands, placed there with such faith and such devotion, seem to me to receive breath and being from the joy and enthusiasm that reign. The star which guides the Magi, tinsel and glass though it is, seems to me to shine and shoot forth rays. The aureole surrounding the manger where the Holy Child is lying seems to glow not as a transparency with candles placed behind it, but with a reflection of celestial light. The tambourines and drums and songs give out melodies as simple and as pleasing as if they were echoes of those heard by the shepherds on that first blest Christmas Eve.

Could there be a festival more joyous, more natural, more tender in appeal and at the same time more exalted in significance — the birth of the Child in the rude stable, with only shepherds to wish him joy; innocence, poverty, simplicity, the very foundations of the magnificent structure of Christianity? Well may children and the poor keep a merry Christmas. They bring to God the gifts which please him best, — purity, faith and love. O, night, well called in Spain "The Good Night," blither than the carnival and holy as Holy Week itself!

From *Holy Night*, by FERNAN CABALLERO. Translated by Katharine Lee Bates

Christmas in Rome

WHAT is the meaning of our English Christmas? What makes it seem so truly Northern, national, and homely, that we do not like to keep the feast upon

a foreign shore? These questions grew upon me as I stood one Advent afternoon beneath the Dome of Florence. . . .

The same thought pursued me as I drove to Rome by Siena, still and brown, uplifted mid her russet hills and wilderness of rolling plain; by Chiusi, with its sepulchral city of a dead and unknown people; through the chestnut forests of the Apennines; by Orvieto's rock, Viterbo's fountains, and the oak-grown solitudes of the Ciminian heights, from which one looks across the broad Lake of Bolsena and the Roman plain. Brilliant sunlight, like that of a day in late September, shone upon the landscape, and I thought — Can this be Christmas? Are they bringing mistletoe and holly on the country carts into the towns in far-off England? Is it clear and frosty there, with the tramp of heels upon the flag, or snowing silently, or foggy, with a round red sun and cries of warning at the corners of the streets?

I reached Rome on Christmas-eve in time to hear midnight services in the Sistine Chapel and St. John Lateran, to breathe the dust of decayed shrines, to wonder at doting cardinals begrimed with snuff, and to resent the open-mouthed bad taste of my countrymen, who made a mockery of these palsy-stricken ceremonies. Nine cardinals going to sleep, nine train-bearers talking scandal, twenty huge, handsome Switzers in the dress devised by Michael Angelo, some ushers, a choir caged off by gilded railings, the insolence and eagerness of polyglot tourists, plenty of wax candles dripping on people's heads, and a continual nasal drone proceeding from the gilded cage, out of which were caught at intervals these words, and these only — "Sæcula Sæculorum, amen." Such was the celebrated Sistine

service. The chapel blazed with light, and very strange did Michael Angelo's Last Judgment, his Sibyls, and his Prophets appear upon the roof and wall above this motley and unmeaning crowd.

Next morning I put on my dress-clothes and white tie and repaired, with groups of Englishmen similarly attired, and of Englishwomen in black crape (the regulation costume), to St. Peter's. It was a glorious and cloudless morning; sunbeams streamed in columns from the southern windows, falling on the vast space full of soldiers and a mingled mass of every kind of people. Up the nave stood double files of the pontifical guard. Monks and nuns mixed with the Swiss cuirassiers and halberds. *Contadini* crowded round the sacred images, and especially round the toe of St. Peter. I saw many mothers lift their swaddled babies up to kiss it. Valets of cardinals, with the invariable red umbrellas, hung about side chapels and sacristies. Purple-mantled *monsignori*, like emperor butterflies, floated down the aisles from sunlight into shadow. Movement, color, and the stir of expectation made the church alive. We showed our dress-clothes to the guard, were admitted within their ranks, and solemnly walked up towards the dome. There, under its broad canopy, stood the altar, glittering with gold and candles. The choir was carpeted and hung with scarlet. Two magnificent thrones rose ready for the Pope. Guards of honor, soldiers, attachés, and the élite of the residents and visitors in Rome were scattered in groups, picturesquely varied by ecclesiastics of all orders and degrees. At ten a stirring took place near the great west door. It opened, and we saw a procession of the Pope and his cardinals. Before him marched the singers and the blowers of the silver

trumpets, making the most liquid melody. Then came his Cap of Maintenance and three tiaras; then a company of mitred priests; next the cardinals in scarlet; and last, aloft beneath a canopy upon the shoulders of men, and flanked by the mystic fans, advanced the Pope himself, swaying to and fro like a Lama or an Aztec king. Still the trumpets blew most silverly, and still the people knelt; and as he came, we knelt and had his blessing. Then he took his state and received homage. After this the choir began to sing a mass of Palestrina's, and the deacons robed the Pope. Marvellous putting on and taking off of robes and tiaras and mitres ensued, during which there was much bowing and praying and burning of incense. At last, when he had reached the highest stage of sacrificial sanctity, he proceeded to the altar, waited on by cardinals and bishops. Having censed it carefully, he took a higher throne and divested himself of part of his robes. Then the mass went on in earnest till the moment of consecration, when it paused, the Pope descended from his throne, passed down the choir, and reached the altar. Every one knelt; the shrill bell tinkled; the silver trumpets blew; the air became sick and heavy with incense, so that sun and candle-light swooned in an atmosphere of odorous cloud-wreaths. The whole church trembled, hearing the strange subtle music vibrate in the dome, and seeing the Pope with his own hands lift Christ's body from the altar and present it to the people. An old parish priest, pilgrim from some valley of the Apennines, who knelt beside me, cried and quivered with excess of adoration. The great tombs around, the sculptured saints and angels, the dome, the volumes of light and incense and unfamiliar melody, the hierarchy ministrant, the white and central

figure of the Pope, the multitude, made up an overpowering scene.

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

Christmas in Burgundy

EVERY year at the approach of Advent, people refresh their memories, clear their throats, and begin preluding, in the long evenings by the fireside, those carols whose invariable and eternal theme is the coming of the Messiah. They take from old closets pamphlets, little collections begrimed with dust and smoke, to which the press, and sometimes the pen, has consigned these songs; and as soon as the first Sunday of Advent sounds, they gossip, they gad about, they sit together by the fireside, sometimes at one house, sometimes at another, taking turns in paying for the chestnuts and white wine, but singing with one common voice the grotesque praises of the *Little Jesus*. There are very few villages even, which, during all the evenings of Advent, do not hear some of these curious canticles shouted in their streets, to the nasal drone of bagpipes. In this case the minstrel comes as a reinforcement to the singers at the fireside; he brings and adds his dose of joy (spontaneous or mercenary, it matters little which) to the joy which breathes around the hearth-stone; and when the voices vibrate and resound, one voice more is always welcome. There, it is not the purity of the notes which makes the concert, but the quantity, — *non qualitas, sed quantitas;* then (to finish at once with the minstrel) when the Saviour has at length been born in the manger, and the beautiful Christmas Eve is passed, the rustic piper makes his round among the houses, where every one compli-

ments and thanks him, and, moreover, gives him in small coin the price of the shrill notes with which he has enlivened the evening entertainments.

More or less until Christmas Eve, all goes on in this way among our devout singers, with the difference of some gallons of wine or some hundreds of chestnuts. But this famous eve once come, the scale is pitched upon a higher key; the closing evening must be a memorable one. The toilet is begun at nightfall; then comes the hour of supper, admonishing divers appetites; and groups, as numerous as possible, are formed to take together this comfortable evening repast. The supper finished, a circle gathers around the hearth, which is arranged and set in order this evening after a particular fashion, and which at a later hour of the night is to become the object of special interest to the children. On the burning brands an enormous log has been placed. This log assuredly does not change its nature, but it changes its name during this evening: it is called the *Suche* (the Yule-log). "Look you," say they to the children, "if you are good this evening, Noël" (for with children one must always personify) "will rain down sugar-plums in the night." And the children sit demurely, keeping as quiet as their turbulent little natures will permit. The groups of older persons, not always as orderly as the children, seize this good opportunity to surrender themselves with merry hearts and boisterous voices to the chanted worship of the miraculous Noël. For this final solemnity, they have kept the most powerful, the most enthusiastic, the most electrifying carols. Noël! Noël! Noël! this magic word resounds on all sides; it seasons every sauce, it is served up with every course. Of the thousands of canticles which are heard on this famous eve, ninety-nine in a hundred begin

and end with this word; which is, one may say, their Alpha and Omega, their crown and footstool. This last evening, the merry-making is prolonged. Instead of retiring at ten or eleven o'clock, as is generally done on all the preceding evenings, they wait for the stroke of midnight: this word sufficiently proclaims to what ceremony they are going to repair. For ten minutes or a quarter of an hour, the bells have been calling the faithful with a triple-bobmajor; and each one, furnished with a little taper streaked with various colors (the Christmas Candle) goes through the crowded streets, where the lanterns are dancing like Will-o'-the-Wisps, at the impatient summons of the multitudinous chimes. It is the Midnight Mass. Once inside the church, they hear with more or less piety the Mass, emblematic of the coming of the Messiah. Then in tumult and great haste they return homeward, always in numerous groups; they salute the Yule-log; they pay homage to the hearth; they sit down at table; and, amid songs which reverberate louder than ever, make this meal of after-Christmas, so long looked for, so cherished, so joyous, so noisy, and which it has been thought fit to call, we hardly know why, *Rossignon*. The supper eaten at nightfall is no impediment, as you may imagine, to the appetite's returning; above all, if the going to and from church has made the devout eaters feel some little shafts of the sharp and biting north-wind. *Rossignon* then goes on merrily, — sometimes far into the morning hours; but, nevertheless, gradually throats grow hoarse, stomachs are filled, the Yule-log burns out, and at last the hour arrives when each one, as best he may, regains his domicile and his bed, and puts with himself between the sheets the material for a good sore-throat, or a good indigestion, for the morrow. Previous to this, care

has been taken to place in the slippers, or wooden shoes of the children, the sugar-plums, which shall be for them, on their waking, the welcome fruits of the Christmas log.

In the Glossary, the *Suche*, or Yule-log, is thus defined: —

"This is a huge log, which is placed on the fire on Christmas Eve, and which in Burgundy is called, on this account, *lai Suche de Noël*. Then the father of the family, particularly among the middle classes, sings solemnly Christmas carols with his wife and children, the smallest of whom he sends into the corner to pray that the Yule-log may bear him some sugar-plums. Meanwhile, little parcels of them are placed under each end of the log, and the children come and pick them up, believing, in good faith, that the great log has borne them."

M. Fertiault. Translated by Henry W. Longfellow

Christmas in Germany

Berlin, *December* 25, 1871

To-day is Christmas day, and I have thought much of you all at home, and have wondered if you've been having an apathetic time as usual. I think we often spend Christmas in a most shocking fashion in America, and I mean to revolutionize all that when I get back. So long a time in Germany has taught me better. Here it is a season of universal joy, and everybody enters into it. Last night we had a Christmas tree at the S.'s, as we always do. We went there at half past six, and it was the prettiest thing to see in every house, nearly, a tree just lighted, or in process of being so. As a separate family lives on each floor, often in one house would be three trees, one above the

other, in the front rooms. The curtains are always drawn up, to give the passers-by the benefit of it. They don't make a fearful undertaking of having a Christmas tree here, as we do in America, and so they are attainable by everybody. The tree is small, to begin with, and nothing is put on it except the tapers and bonbons. It is fixed on a small stand in the centre of a large square table covered with a white cloth, and each person's presents are arranged in a separate pile around it. The tree is only lighted for the sake of beauty, and for the air of festivity it throws over the thing. — After a crisp walk in the moonlight (which I performed in the style of "Johnny-look-up-in-the-air," for I was engaged in staring into house-windows, so far as it was practicable), we sat down to enjoy a cup of tea and a piece of cake. I had just begun my second cup, when, Presto! the parlour doors flew open, and there stood the little green tree, blossoming out into lights, and throwing its gleams over the well-laden table. There was a general scramble and a search for one's own pile, succeeded by deep silence and suspense while we opened the papers. Such a hand shaking and embracing and thanking as followed! concluding with the satisfactory conviction that we each had "just what we wanted." Germans do not despise the utilitarian in their Christmas gifts, as we do, but, between these and their birthday offerings, expect to be set up for the rest of the year in the necessaries of life as well as in its superfluities. Presents of stockings, underclothes, dresses, handkerchiefs, soaps — nothing comes amiss. And every one must give to every one else. That is LAW.

Amy Fay in *Music-Study in Germany.*

Christmas Dinner in a Clipper's Fo'c'sle

CHRISTMAS DAY we were running before a fine westerly gale for the mouth of the channel. We had been hove to for forty-eight hours; for, though we had sighted Fayal in the Azores, the Scotchman was afraid to run because the sun was obscured and he couldn't get an observation. So he lay under lower main topsail and fore topmast staysail, and let the fine fair wind blow away while he waited for the sun to come out so he could find out where he was. Not much like Captain Hurlburt in the old Tanjore. Early Christmas morning, a little topsail schooner — one of the fleet of clippers known as "Western Island Fruiters" — came flying along before the wind like a little butterfly, and, seeing the big ship hove to, I suppose they thought there must be something the matter with her; so they kindly ran under our stern and hailed. After finding out where we were from, and where bound, the skipper asked us what was the matter.

"Nothing," said Russell.

"Well," said the schooner skipper, "what are ye hove to for?"

Russell told him he wanted to get a "sight" to find his position.

"Foller me, you blahsted fool," said the skipper, and putting up his helm he left us. It must have been the sight of that little schooner running so confidently that shamed him, for he squared away and made sail at once. The cook had killed the pig the day before, so we were to have fresh meat, that is, baked pork and plum duff, with sauce, for our Christmas dinner. Although I could not eat much of any-

thing, I looked forward with great anticipations to the fresh meat which I was anxious to taste. When the watch was called at half-past eleven, she was running dead before, and rolling both rails under; for iron ships are proverbially wet. Some call them "diving bells." Three men went to the galley: one for the duff, one for the pork, and the other for the duff sauce.

They got their grub and started forward. Just as they got nicely clear of the deck-house, where there was nothing to protect them, she gave a heavy roll to port, scooping up several tons of water over the rail; then she rolled as far to starboard, doing the same trick again. And now the decks being full of water level with both rails, a big sea raised her stern high in air. The fellow who had the pork yelled for somebody to open the door, and somebody did, with the result that as her stern went up the three men with the grub and a tidal wave of salt water all came into the forecastle together.

Oh, what a merry Christmas that was! The whole watch were sitting on their chests waiting for their dinner, or perhaps some were not entirely dressed when that green sea came in. It washed all the men and chests up into the eyes of her, and drowned out all the lower bunks. The pork and duff went somewhere. The sauce, of course, disappeared entirely. Every man was soaked, and so was every rag of clothing belonging to the whole watch, except the bedding in the upper bunks, and that was pretty well wet from the splashing. Fortunately, I had the upper bunk next the door, so that it all went by me, and I expected the splashing caused by the sudden stoppage of the water by the bows. After the flood had subsided, there came a jawing match.

"Who hollered to open that door?" "No." "But what bloody fool opened it?"

So and so.

"You're a liar!"

I thought there would be a general row, but they were too wet and too cold and disheartened to fight about anything. They pulled their chests out from under each other, satisfied themselves that they didn't own a dry stitch for a change, and then, fishing out the pork and duff from under the bunks, threw the latter overboard, and made a sorry Christmas dinner on semi-saturated fresh pork and hardtack.

HERBERT ELLIOTT HAMBLEN in *On Many Seas*

Christmas in Jail

"RICHARD MARSTON, I charge you with unlawfully taking, stealing, and carrying away, in company with others, one thousand head of mixed cattle, more or less, the property of one Walter Hood, of Outer Back, Momberah, in or about the month of June last."

"All right; why don't you make it a few more while you're about it?"

"That'll do," he said, nodding his head; "you decline to say anything. Well, I can't exactly wish you a merry Christmas—fancy this being Christmas Eve, by Jove!—but you'll be cool enough this deuced hot weather till the sessions in February, which is more than some of us can say. Good-night." He went out and locked the door. I sat down on my blanket on the floor and hid my head in my hands. I wonder it didn't burst with what I felt then. Strange that I shouldn't have felt half as bad when the judge, the

other day, sentenced me to be a dead man in a couple of months. But I was young then.

* * * * * * *

Christmas Day! Christmas Day! So this is how I was to spend it after all, I thought, as I woke up at dawn, and saw the gray light just beginning to get through the bars of the window of the cell.

Here was I locked up, caged, ironed, disgraced, a felon and an outcast for the rest of my life. Jim, flying for his life, hiding from every honest man, every policeman in the country looking after him, and authorized to catch him or shoot him down like a sheep-killing dog. Father living in the Hollow, like a black-fellow in a cave, afraid to spend the blessed Christmas with his wife and daughter, like the poorest man in the land could do if he was only honest. Mother half dead with grief, and Aileen ashamed to speak to the man that loved and respected her from her childhood. Gracey Storefield not daring to think of me or say my name, after seeing me carried off a prisoner before her eyes. Here was a load of misery and disgrace heaped up together, to be borne by the whole family, now and for the time to come — by the innocent as well as the guilty. And for what? Because we had been too idle and careless to work regularly and save our money, though well able to do it, like honest men. Because, little by little, we had let bad dishonest ways and flash manners grow upon us, all running up an account that had to be paid some day.

And now the day of reckoning had come — sharp and sudden with a vengeance! Well, what call had we to look for anything else? We had been working for it; now we had got it, and had to bear it. Not for want of warning, neither. What had mother and Aileen been saying ever

since we could remember? Warning upon warning. Now the end had come just as they said. Of course I knew in a general way that I couldn't be punished or be done anything to right off. I knew law enough for that. The next thing would be that I should have to be brought up before the magistrates and committed for trial as soon as they could get any evidence.

After breakfast, flour and water or hominy, I forget which, the warder told me that there wasn't much chance of my being brought up before Christmas was over. The police magistrate was away on a month's leave, and the other magistrates would not be likely to attend before the end of the week, anyway. So I must make myself comfortable where I was. Comfortable!

ROLF BOLDREWOOD in *Robbery under Arms*

Colonel Carter's Christmas Tree

SOON there stole over every one in the room that sense of peace and contentment which always comes when one is at ease in an atmosphere where love and kindness reign. The soft light of the candles, the low, rich color of the simple room with its festoons of cedar and pine, the aroma of the rare wine, and especially the spicy smell of the hemlock warmed by the burning tapers — that rare, unmistakable smell which only Christmas greens give out and which few of us know but once a year, and often not then; all had their effect on host and guests. Katy became so happy that she lost all fear of her father and prattled on to Fitz and me (we had pinned to her frock the rose the Colonel had bought for the "grown-up daughter," and she

was wearing it just as Aunt Nancy wore hers), and Aunt Nancy in her gentle voice talked finance to Mr. Klutchem in a way that made him open his eyes, and Fitz laughingly joined in, giving a wide berth to anything bearing on "corners" or "combinations" or "shorts" and "longs," while I, to spare Aunt Nancy, kept one eye on Jim,[1] winking at him with it once or twice when he was about to commit some foolishness, and so the happy feast went on.

As to the Colonel, he was never in better form. To him the occasion was the revival of the old Days of Plenty — the days his soul coveted and loved: his to enjoy, his to dispense.

But if it had been delightful before, what was it when Chad, after certain mysterious movements in the next room, bore aloft the crowning glory of the evening, and placed it with all its candles in the centre of the table, the Colonel leaning far back in his chair to give him room, his coat thrown wide, his face aglow, his eyes sparkling with the laughter that always kept him young!

Then it was that the Colonel, gathering under his hand a little sheaf of paper lamplighters which Chad had twisted, rose from his seat, picked up a slender glass that had once served his father ("only seben o' dat kind left," Chad told me) and which that faithful serviter had just filled from the flow of the old decanter of like period, and with a wave of his hand as if to command attention, said, in a clear, firm voice that indicated the dignity of the occasion: "My friends, — my vehy dear friends, I should say, for I can omit none of you — certainly not this little angel who has captured our hearts, and surely not our distinguished guest, Mr.

[1] "Jim" is the pickaninny in buttons, who, as Chad says, "looks like he's busted out with brass measles."

Klutchem, who has honored us with his presence,— befo' I kindle with the torch of my love these little beacons which are to light each one of us on our way until another Christmas season overtakes us; befo', I say, these sparks burst into life, I want you fill yo' glasses (Chad had done that to the brim — even little Katy's) and drink to the health and happiness of the lady on my right, whose presence is always a benediction and whose loyal affection is one of the sweetest treasures of my life!"

Everybody except the dear lady stood up — even little Katy — and Aunt Nancy's health was drunk amid her blushes, she remarking to Mr. Klutchem that George would always embarrass her with these too flattering speeches of his, which was literally true, this being the fourth time I had heard similar sentiments expressed in the dear lady's honor.

This formal toast over, the Colonel's whole manner changed. He was no longer the dignified host conducting the feast with measured grace. With a spring in his voice and a certain unrestrained joyousness, he called to Chad to bring him a light for his first lamplighter. Then, with the paper wisp balanced in his hand, he began counting the several candles, peeping into the branches with the manner of a boy.

"One — two — three — fo' — yes, plenty of them, but we are goin' to begin with the top one. This is yours, Nancy — this little white one on the vehy tip-top. Gentlemen, this top candle is always reserved for Miss Caarter," and the lighted taper kindled it into a blaze. "Just like yo' eyes, my dear, burnin' steadily and warmin' everybody," and he tapped her hand caressingly with his fingers. "And now, where is that darlin' little Katy's — she must have a white one, too — here it is. Oh, what a brave little candle!

Not a bit of sputterin' or smoke. See, dearie, what a beautiful blaze! May all your life be as bright and happy. And here is Mr. Klutchem's right alongside of Katy's — a fine red one. There he goes, steady and clear and strong — And Fitz — dear old Fitz. Let's see what kind of a candle Fitz should have. Do you know, Fitz, if I had my way, I'd light the whole tree for you. One candle is absurd for Fitz! There, Fitz, it's off — another red one! All you millionnaires must have red candles! And the Major! Ah, the Major!" — and he held out his hand to me — "Let's see — yaller? No, that will never do for you, Major. Pink? That's better. There now, see how fine you look and how evenly you burn — just like yo' love, my dear boy, that never fails me."

The circle of the table was now complete; each guest had a candle alight, and each owner was studying the several wicks as if the future could be read in their blaze: Aunt Nancy with a certain seriousness. To her the custom was not new; the memories of her life were interwoven with many just such top candles, — one I knew of myself, that went out long, long ago, and has never been rekindled since.

The Colonel stopped, and for a moment we thought he was about to take his seat, although some wicks were still unlighted — his own among them.

Instantly a chorus of voices went up: "You have forgotten your own, Colonel — let me light one for you," etc., etc. Even little Katy had noticed the omission, and was pulling at my sleeve to call attention to the fact: the Colonel's candle was the only one she really cared for. "One minute," cried the Colonel. "Time enough; the absent ones fust" — and he stooped down and peered among the branches — "yes, — that's just the very one.

This candle, Mr. Klutchem, is for our old Mammy Henny, who is at Caarter Hall, carin' for my property, and who must be pretty lonely to-day — ah, there you go, Mammy! — blazin' away like one o' yo' own fires!"

Three candles now were all that were left unlighted; two of them side by side on the same branch, a brown one and a white one, and below these a yellow one standing all alone.

The Colonel selected a fresh taper, kindled it in the flame of Aunt Nancy's top candle, and turning to Chad, who was standing behind his chair, said: —

"I'm goin' to put you, Chad, where you belong, — right alongside of me. Here, Katy, darlin', take this taper and light this white candle for me, and I'll light the brown one for Chad," and he picked up another taper, lighted it, and handed it to the child.

"Now!"

As the two candles flashed into flame, the Colonel leaned over, and holding out his hand to the old servant — boys together, these two, said in a voice full of tenderness: —

"Many years together, Chad, — many years, old man."

Chad's face broke into a smile as he pressed the Colonel's hand.

"Thank ye, marster," was all he trusted himself to say — a title the days of freedom had never robbed him of — and then he turned his head to hide the tears.

During the whole scene little Jim had stood on tiptoe, his eyes growing brighter and brighter as each candle flashed into a blaze. Up to the time of the lighting of the last guest candle his face had expressed nothing but increasing delight. When, however, Mammy Henny's candle, and then Chad's were kindled, I saw an expression of wonder-

ment cross his features which gradually settled into one of profound disappointment.

But the Colonel had not yet taken his seat. He had relighted the taper — this time from Mammy Henny's candle — and stood with it in his hand, peering into the branches as if looking for something he had lost.

"Ah, here's another. I wonder — who — this — little — yaller — candle — can — be — for," he said slowly, looking around the room and accentuating each word. "I reckon they're all here. Let me see — Aunt Nancy, Mr. Klutchem, Katy, Fitz, the Major, Mammy Henny, Chad, and me. Yes — all here. Oh!" — and he looked at the boy with a quizzical smile on his face — "I came vehy near forgettin'.

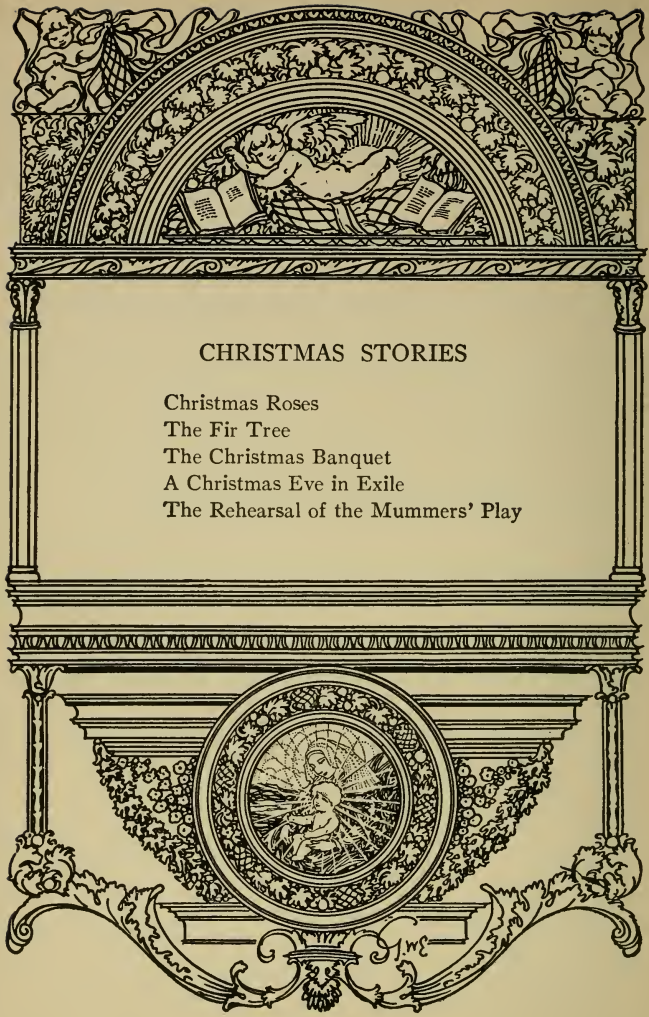
"This little yaller candle is Jim's."

F. Hopkinson Smith in *Colonel Carter's Christmas*

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IX

CHRISTMAS STORIES



CHRISTMAS STORIES

Christmas Roses
The Fir Tree
The Christmas Banquet
A Christmas Eve in Exile
The Rehearsal of the Mummers' Play


DIEU VOUS BENIT
GEORGE WINTHROP EDWARDS

"IT was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us, and all of us! And so, as Tiny Tim observed,

GOD BLESS US,
EVERY ONE."

CHARLES DICKENS

Christmas Roses

WHEN our guests were gone Pelleas and I sat for some while beside the drawing-room fire. They had brought us a box of Christmas roses and these made sweet the room as if with a secret Spring — a Little Spring, such as comes to us all, now and then, through the year. And it was the enchanted hour, when Christmas eve has just passed and no one is yet awakened by the universal note of Get-Your-Stocking-Before-Breakfast.

"For that matter," Pelleas said, "every day is a loving cup, only some of us see only one of its handles: Our own."

And after a time: —

"Isn't there a legend," he wanted to know, "or if there isn't one there ought to be one, that the first flowers were Christmas roses and that you can detect their odour in all other flowers? I'm not sure," he warmed to the subject, "but that they say if you look steadily, with clear eyes, you can see all about every flower many little lines, in the shape of a Christmas rose!"

Of course nothing beautiful is difficult to believe. Even in the windows of the great florists, where the dear flowers pose as if for their portraits, we think that one looking closely through the glass may see in their faces the spirit of the Christmas roses. And when the flowers are made a gift of love the spirit is set free. Who knows? Perhaps the gracious little spirit is in us all, waiting for its liberty in our best gifts.

And at thought of gifts I said, on Christmas eve of all times, what had been for some time in my heart: —

"Pelleas, we ought — we really ought, you know, to make a new will."

The word casts a veritable shadow on the page as I write it. Pelleas, conscious of the same shadow, moved and frowned.

"But why, Etarre?" he asked; "I had an uncle who lived to be ninety."

"So will you," I said, "and still —"

"He began translating Theocritus at ninety," Pelleas continued convincingly.

"I'll venture he had made his will by then, though," said I.

"Is that any reason why I should make mine?" Pelleas demanded. "I *never* did the things my family did."

"Like living until ninety?" I murmured.

O, I could not love Pelleas if he was never unreasonable. It seems to me that the privilege of unreason is one of the gifts of marriage; and when I hear The Married chiding each other for the exercise of this gift I long to cry: Is it not tiresome enough in all conscience to have to keep up a brave show of reason for one's friends, without wearing a uniform of logic in private? Laugh at each other's unreason for your pastime, and Heaven bless you!

Pelleas can do more than this: He can laugh at his own unreason. And when he has done so: —

"Ah, well, I know we ought," he admitted, "but I do so object to the literary style of wills."

It has long been a sadness of ours that the law makes all the poor dead talk alike in this last office of the human pleasure, so that cartman and potentate and philosopher give away their chattels to the same dreary choice of forms. No matter with what charming propriety they have in life written little letters to accompany gifts, most sensitively

shading the temper of bestowal, yet in the majesty of their passing they are forced into a very strait-jacket of phrasing so that verily, to bequeath a thing to one's friend is well-nigh to throw it at him. Yes, one of the drawbacks to dying is the diction of wills.

Pelleas meditated for a moment and then laughed out.

"Telegrams," said he, "are such a social convenience in life that I don't see why they don't extend their function. Then all we should need would be two witnesses, ready for anything, and some yellow telegraph blanks, and a lawyer to file the messages whenever we should die, telling all our friends what we wish them to have."

At once we fell to planning the telegrams, quite as if the Eye of the Law knew what it is to wrinkle at the corners.

As,

Mrs. Lawrence Knight,
Little Rosemont,
L. I.

I wish you to have my mother's pearls and her mahogany and my Samarcand rug and my Langhorne Plutarch and a kiss.

Aunt Etarre

and

Mr. Eric Charters,
To His Club.

Come to the house and get the Royal Sevres tea-service on which you and Lisa had your first tea together and a check made out to you in my check book in the library table drawer.

Uncle Pelleas

And so on, with the witnesses' names properly in the corners.

"Perfect," said I with enthusiasm. "O Pelleas, let us get a bill through to this effect."

"But we may live to be only ninety, you know," he reminded me.

We went to the window, presently, and threw it open to the chance of hearing the bird of dawning singing all night long in the Park, which is of course, in New York, where it sings on Star of Bethlehem night. We did not hear it, but it is something to have been certain that it was there. And as we closed the casement,

"After all," Pelleas said seriously, "the Telegraph Will Bill would have to do only with property. And a will ought to be concerned with soberer matters."

So it ought, in spite of its dress of diction, rather like the motley.

"A man," Pelleas continued, "ought to have something more important to will away than his house and his watch and his best bed. A man's poor soul, now — unless he is an artist, which he probably is not — has no chance verbally to leave anybody anything."

"It makes its will every day," said I.

"Even so," Pelleas contended, "it ought to die rich if it's anything of a soul."

And that is true enough.

"Suppose," Pelleas suggested, "the telegrams were to contain something like this: 'And from my spirit to yours I bequeath the hard-won knowledge that you must be true from the beginning. But if by any chance you have not been so, then you must be true from the moment that you know.' Why not?"

Why not, indeed?

"I think that would be mine to give," Pelleas said re-

flectively; "and what would yours be, Etarre?" he asked.

At that I fell in sudden abashment. What could I say? What would I will my poor life to mean to any one who chances to know that I have lived at all? O, I dare say I should have been able to formulate many a fine-sounding phrase about the passion for perfection, but confronted with the necessity I could think of nothing save a few straggling truths.

"I don't know," said I uncertainly; "I am sure of so little, save self-giving. I should like to bequeath some knowledge of the magic of self-giving. Now Nichola," I hazarded, to evade the matter, "would no doubt say: 'And from my soul to your soul this word about the universe: *Helping is why.*' "

"But you—you, Etarre," Pelleas persisted; "what would the real You will to others, in this mortuary telegram?"

And as I looked at him I knew.

"O Pelleas," I said, "I think I would telegraph to every one: 'From my spirit to your spirit, some understanding of the preciousness of love. And the need to keep it true.'"

I shall always remember with what gladness he turned to me. I wished that his smile and our bright hearth and our Christmas roses might bless every one.

"I wanted you to say that," said Pelleas.

ZONA GALE in *The Loves of Pelleas and Etarre*

The Fir Tree

FAR away in the deep forest there once grew a pretty Fir Tree; the situation was delightful, the sun shone full upon him, the breeze played freely around him, and in

the neighbourhood grew many companion fir trees, some older, some younger. But the little Fir Tree was not happy: he was always longing to be tall; he thought not of the warm sun and the fresh air; he cared not for the merry, prattling peasant children who came to the forest to look for strawberries and raspberries. Except, indeed, sometimes, when after having filled their pitchers, or threaded the bright berries on a straw, they would sit down near the little Fir Tree, and say, "What a pretty little tree this is!" and then the Fir Tree would feel very much vexed.

Year by year he grew, a long green shoot sent he forth every year; for you may always tell how many years a fir tree has lived by counting the number of joints in its stem.

"Oh, that I was as tall as the others are," sighed the little Tree, "then I should spread out my branches so far, and my crown should look out over the wide world around! the birds would build their nests among my branches, and when the wind blew I should bend my head so grandly, just as the others do!"

He had not pleasure in the sunshine, in the song of the birds, or in the birds, or in the red clouds that sailed over him every morning and evening.

In the winter time, when the ground was covered with the white, glistening snow, there was a hare that would come continually scampering about, and jumping right over the little Tree's head — and that was most provoking! However, two winters passed away, and by the third the Tree was so tall that the hare was obliged to run around it. "Oh! to grow, to grow, to become tall and old, that is the only thing in the world worth living for;" — so thought the Tree.

The wood cutters came in the autumn and felled some

among the largest of the trees; this happened every year, and our young Fir, who was by this time a tolerable height, shuddered when he saw those grand, magnificent trees fall with a tremendous crash, crackling to the earth: their boughs were then all cut off. Terribly naked, and lanky, and long did the stem look after this — they could hardly be recognized. They were laid one upon another in wagons, and horses drew them away, far, far away, from the forest. Where could they be going? What might be their fortunes?

So next spring, when the Swallows and the Storks had returned from abroad, the Tree asked them, saying, "Know you not whither they are taken? have you not met them?"

The swallows knew nothing about the matter, but the Stork looked thoughtful for a moment, then nodded his head, and said: "Yes, I believe I have seen them! As I was flying from Egypt to this place I met several ships; those ships had splendid masts. I have little doubt that they were the trees that you speak of; they smelled like fir wood. I may congratulate you, for they sailed gloriously, quite gloriously!"

"Oh, that I, too, were tall enough to sail upon the sea! Tell me what it is, this sea, and what it looks like."

"Thank you, it would take too long, a great deal!" said the Stork, and away he stalked.

"Rejoice in thy youth!" said the Sunbeams; "rejoice in thy luxuriant youth, in the fresh life that is within thee!"

And the Wind kissed the Tree, and the Dew wept tears over him, but the Fir Tree understood them not.

When Christmas approached, many quite young trees were felled — trees which were some of them not so tall

or of just the same height as the young restless Fir Tree who was always longing to be away. These young trees were chosen from the most beautiful, their branches were not cut off, they were laid in a wagon, and horses drew them away, far, far away from the forest.

"Where are they going?" asked the Fir Tree. "They are not larger than I am; indeed, one of them was much less. Why do they keep all their branches? where can they be gone?"

"We know! we know!" twittered the Sparrows. "We peeped in through the windows of the town below! we know where they are gone! Oh, you cannot think what honour and glory they receive! We looked through the window-panes and saw them planted in a warm room, and decked out with such beautiful things — gilded apples, sweetmeats, playthings, and hundreds of bright candles!"

"And then?" asked the Fir Tree, trembling in every bough; "and then? what happened then?"

"Oh, we saw no more. That was beautiful, beautiful beyond compare!"

"Is this glorious lot destined to be mine?" cried the Fir Tree, with delight. "This is far better than sailing over the sea. How I long for the time! Oh, that I were even now in the wagon! that I were in the warm room, honoured and adorned! and then — yes, then, something still better must happen, else why should they take the trouble to decorate me? it must be that something still greater, still more splendid, must happen — but what? Oh, I suffer, I suffer with longing! I know not what it is that I feel!"

"Rejoice in our love!" said the Air and the Sunshine. "Rejoice in thy youth and thy freedom!"

But rejoice he never would: he grew and grew, in winter as in summer he stood there clothed in green, dark green foliage; the people that saw him said, "That is a beautiful tree!" and, next Christmas, he was the first that was felled. The axe struck sharply through the wood, the tree fell to the earth with a heavy groan; he suffered an agony, a faintness, that he had never expected. He quite forgot to think of his good fortune, he felt such sorrow at being compelled to leave his home, the place whence he had sprung; he knew that he should never see again those dear old comrades, or the little bushes and flowers that had flourished under his shadow, perhaps not even the birds. Neither did he find the journey by any means pleasant.

The Tree first came to himself when, in the court-yard to which he first was taken with the other trees, he heard a man say, "This is a splendid one, the very thing we want!"

Then came two smartly dressed servants, and carried the Fir Tree into a large and handsome saloon. Pictures hung on the walls, and on the mantel-piece stood large Chinese vases with lions on the lids; there were rocking-chairs, silken sofas, tables covered with picture-books, and toys that had cost a hundred times a hundred rix-thalers — at least so said the children. And the Fir Tree was planted in a large cask filled with sand, but no one could know that it was a cask, for it was hung with green cloth and placed upon the carpet woven of many gay colours. Oh, how the Tree trembled! What was to happen next? A young lady, assisted by the servants, now began to adorn him.

Upon some branches they hung little nets cut out of

coloured paper, every net filled with sugar-plums; from others gilded apples and walnuts were suspended, looking just as if they had grown there; and more than a hundred little wax tapers, red, blue, and white, were placed here and there among the boughs. Dolls, that looked almost like men and women, — the Tree had never seen such things before, — seemed dancing to and fro among the leaves, and highest, on the summit, was fastened a large star of gold tinsel; this was, indeed, splendid, splendid beyond compare! "This evening," they said, "this evening it will be lighted up."

"Would that it were evening!" thought the Tree. "Would that the lights were kindled, for then — what will happen then? Will the trees come out of the forest to see me? Will the sparrows fly here and look in through the window-panes? Shall I stand here adorned both winter and summer?"

He thought much of it; he thought till he had bark-ache with longing, and bark-aches with trees are as bad as head-aches with us. The candles were lighted, — oh, what a blaze of splendour! the Tree trembled in all his branches, so that one of them caught fire. "Oh, dear!" cried the young lady, and it was extinguished in great haste.

So the Tree dared not tremble again; he was so fearful of losing something of his splendour, he felt almost bewildered in the midst of all this glory and brightness. And now, all of a sudden, both folding-doors were flung open, and a troop of children rushed in as if they had a mind to jump over him. The older people followed more quietly; the little ones stood quite silent, but only for a moment! then their jubilee burst forth afresh; they

shouted till the walls re-echoed, they danced round the Tree, one present after another was torn down.

"What are they doing?" thought the Tree; "what will happen now!" And the candles burned down to the branches, so they were extinguished, — and the children were given leave to plunder the Tree. Oh! they rushed upon him in such riot, that the boughs all crackled; had not his summit been festooned with the gold star to the ceiling he would have been overturned.

The children danced and played about with their beautiful playthings; no one thought any more of the Tree except the old nurse, who came and peeped among the boughs, but it was only to see whether perchance a fig or an apple had not been left among them.

"A story, a story!" cried the children, pulling a short, thick man toward the Tree. He sat down, saying, "It is pleasant to sit under the shade of green boughs; besides, the Tree may be benefited by hearing my story. But I shall only tell you one. Would you like to hear about Ivedy Avedy, or about Humpty Dumpty, who fell downstairs, and yet came to the throne and won the Princess?"

"Ivedy Avedy!" cried some; "Humpty Dumpty!" cried others; there was a famous uproar; the Fir Tree alone was silent, thinking to himself, "Ought I to make a noise as they do? or ought I to do nothing at all?" for he most certainly was one of the company, and had done all that had been required of him.

And the short, thick man told the story of Humpty Dumpty, who fell downstairs, and yet came to the throne and won the Princess. And the children clapped their hands and called out for another; they wanted to hear the story of Ivedy Avedy also, but they did not get it.

The Fir Tree stood meanwhile quite silent and thoughtful — the birds in the forest had never related anything like this. "Humpty Dumpty fell downstairs, and yet was raised to the throne and won the Princess! Yes, yes, strange things come to pass in the world!" thought the Fir Tree, who believed it must all be true, because such a pleasant man had related it. "Ah, ah! who knows but I may fall downstairs and win a Princess?" And he rejoiced in the expectation of being next day again decked out with candles and playthings, gold and fruit.

"To-morrow I will not tremble," thought he. "I will rejoice in my magnificence. To-morrow I shall again hear the story of Humpty Dumpty, and perhaps that about Ivedy Avedy likewise," and the Tree mused thereupon all night.

In the morning the maids came in.

"Now begins my state anew!" thought the Tree. But they dragged him out of the room, up the stairs, and into an attic-chamber, and there thrust him into a dark corner, where not a ray of light could penetrate. "What can be the meaning of this?" thought the Tree. "What am I to do here? What shall I hear in this place?" And he leant against the wall, and thought, and thought. And plenty of time he had for thinking it over, for day after day and night after night passed away, and yet no one ever came into the room. At last somebody did come in, but it was only to push into the corner some old trunks; the Tree was now entirely hidden from sight, and apparently entirely forgotten.

"It is now winter," thought the Tree. "The ground is hard and covered with snow; they cannot plant me now, so I am to stay here in shelter till the spring. Men are so

clever and prudent! I only wish it were not so dark and dreadfully lonely! not even a little hare! Oh, how pleasant it was in the forest, when the snow lay on the ground and the hare scampered about, — yes, even when he jumped over my head, though I did not like it then. It is so terribly lonely here."

"Squeak, squeak!" cried a little Mouse, just then gliding forward. Another followed; they snuffed about the Fir Tree, and then slipped in and out among the branches.

"It is horribly cold!" said the little Mice. "Otherwise it is very comfortable here. Don't you think so, you old Fir Tree?"

"I am not old," said the Fir Tree; "there are many who are much older than I am."

"How came you here?" asked the Mice, "and what do you know?" They were most uncommonly curious. "Tell us about the most delightful place on earth. Have you ever been there? Have you been into the store room, where cheeses lie on the shelves, and bacon hangs from the ceiling; where one can dance over tallow candles; where one goes in thin and comes out fat?"

"I know nothing about that," said the Tree, "but I know the forest, where the sun shines and where the birds sing!" and then he spoke of his youth and its pleasures. The little Mice had never heard anything like it before; they listened so attentively and said, "Well, to be sure! how much you have seen! how happy you have been!"

"Happy!" repeated the Fir Tree, in surprise, and he thought a moment over all that he had been saying, — "Yes, on the whole, those were pleasant times!" He then

told them about the Christmas eve, when he had been decked out with cakes and candles.

"Oh!" cried the little Mice, "how happy you have been, you old Fir Tree!"

"I am not old at all!" returned the Fir; "it is only this winter that I have left the forest; I am just in the prime of life!"

"How well you can talk!" said the little Mice; and the next night they came again, and brought with them four other little Mice, who wanted also to hear the Tree's history; and the more the Tree spoke of his youth in the forest, the more vividly he remembered it, and said, "Yes, those were pleasant times! but they may come again, they may come again! Humpty Dumpty fell downstairs, and for all that he won the Princess; perhaps I, too, may win a Princess;" and then the Fir Tree thought of a pretty little delicate Birch Tree that grew in the forest, — a real Princess, a very lovely Princess, was she to the Fir Tree.

"Who is this Humpty Dumpty?" asked the little Mice. Whereupon he related the tale; he could remember every word of it perfectly: and the little Mice were ready to jump to the top of the Tree for joy. The night following several more Mice came, and on Sunday came also two Rats; they, however, declared that the story was not at all amusing, which much vexed the little Mice, who, after hearing their opinion, could not like it so well either.

"Do you know only that one story?" asked the Rats.

"Only that one!" answered the Tree; "I heard it on the happiest evening of my life, though I did not then know how happy I was."

"It is a miserable story! Do you know none about pork and tallow? — no store-room story?"

"No," said the Tree.

"Well, then, we have heard enough of it!" returned the Rats, and they went their ways.

The little Mice, too, never came again. The Tree sighed. "It was pleasant when they sat round me, those busy little Mice, listening to my words. Now that, too, is all past! however, I shall have pleasure in remembering it, when I am taken away from this place."

But when would that be? One morning, people came and routed out the lumber room; the trunks were taken away, the Tree, too, was dragged out of the corner; they threw him carelessly on the floor, but one of the servants picked him up and carried him downstairs. Once more he beheld the light of day.

"Now life begins again!" thought the Tree; he felt the fresh air, the warm sunbeams — he was out in the court. All happened so quickly that the Tree quite forgot to look at himself, — there was so much to look at all around. The court joined a garden, everything was so fresh and blooming, the roses clustered so bright and so fragrant round the trellis-work, the lime-trees were in full blossom, and the swallows flew backwards and forwards, twittering, "Quirri-virri-vit, my beloved is come!" but it was not the Fir Tree whom they meant.

"I shall live! I shall live!" He was filled with delighted hope; he tried to spread out his branches, but, alas! they were all dried up and yellow. He was thrown down upon a heap of weeds and nettles. The star of gold tinsel that had been left fixed on his crown now sparkled brightly in the sunshine.

Some merry children were playing in the court, the same who at Christmas time had danced round the Tree. One

of the youngest now perceived the gold star, and ran to tear it off.

"Look at it, still fastened to the ugly old Christmas Tree!" cried he, trampling upon the boughs till they broke under his boots.

And the Tree looked on all the flowers of the garden now blooming in the freshness of their beauty; he looked upon himself, and he wished from his heart that he had been left to wither alone in the dark corner of the lumber room; he called to mind his happy forest life, the merry Christmas eve, and the little Mice who had listened so eagerly when he related the story of Humpty Dumpty.

"Past, all past!" said the poor Tree. "Had I but been happy, as I might have been! Past, all past!"

And the servant came and broke the Tree into small pieces, heaped them up and set fire to them. And the Tree groaned deeply, and every groan sounded like a little shot; the children all ran up to the place and jumped about in front of the blaze, looking into it and crying, "Piff, piff!" But at each of those heavy groans the Fir Tree thought of a bright summer's day, or a starry winter's night in the forest, of Christmas eve, or of Humpty Dumpty, the only story that he knew and could relate. And at last the Tree was burned.

The boys played about the court; on the bosom of the youngest sparkled the gold star that the Tree had worn on the happiest evening of his life; but that was past, and the Tree was past, and the story also, past! past! for all stories must come to an end, some time or other.

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

The Christmas Banquet

IN a certain old gentleman's last will and testament there appeared a bequest, which, as his final thought and deed, was singularly in keeping with a long life of melancholy eccentricity. He devised a considerable sum for establishing a fund, the interest of which was to be expended, annually forever, in preparing a Christmas Banquet for ten of the most miserable persons that could be found. It seemed not to be the testator's purpose to make these half a score of sad hearts merry, but to provide that the storm of fierce expression of human discontent should not be drowned, even for that one holy and joyful day, amid the acclamations of festal gratitude which all Christendom sends up. And he desired, likewise, to perpetuate his own remonstrance against the earthly course of Providence, and his sad and sour dissent from those systems of religion or philosophy which either find sunshine in the world or draw it down from heaven.

The task of inviting the guests, or of selecting among such as might advance their claims to partake of this dismal hospitality, was confided to the two trustees or stewards of the fund. These gentlemen, like their deceased friend, were sombre humorists, who made it their principal occupation to number the sable threads in the web of human life, and drop all the golden ones out of the reckoning. They performed their present office with integrity and judgment. The aspect of the assembled company, on the day of the first festival, might not, it is true, have satisfied every beholder that these were especially the individuals, chosen forth from all the world, whose griefs were worthy to stand as indicators of the mass of human suffering. Yet,

after due consideration, it could not be disputed that here was a variety of hopeless discomfort, which, if it arose from causes apparently inadequate, was thereby only the shrewder imputation against the nature and mechanism of life.

The arrangements and decorations of the banquet were probably intended to signify that death in life which had been the testator's definition of existence. The hall, illuminated by torches, was hung round with curtains of deep and dusky purple, and adorned with branches of cypress and wreaths of artificial flowers, imitative of such as used to be strown over the dead. A sprig of parsley was laid by every plate. The main reservoir of wine was a sepulchral urn of silver, whence the liquor was distributed around the table in small vases, accurately copied from those that held the tears of ancient mourners. Neither had the stewards — if it were their taste that arranged these details — forgotten the fantasy of the old Egyptians, who seated a skeleton at every festive board, and mocked their own merriment with the imperturbable grin of a death's-head. Such a fearful guest, shrouded in a black mantle, sat now at the head of the table. It was whispered, I know not with what truth, that the testator himself had once walked the visible world with the machinery of that same skeleton, and that it was one of the stipulations of his will, that he should thus be permitted to sit, from year to year, at the banquet which he had instituted. If so, it was perhaps covertly implied that he had cherished no hopes of bliss beyond the grave to compensate for the evils which he felt or imagined here. And if, in their bewildered conjectures as to the purpose of earthly existence, the banqueters should throw aside the veil, and cast an inquiring glance at this figure of death, as seeking thence

the solution otherwise unattainable, the only reply would be a stare of the vacant eye caverns and a grin of the skeleton jaws. Such was the response that the dead man had fancied himself to receive when he asked of Death to solve the riddle of his life; and it was his desire to repeat it when the guests of his dismal hospitality should find themselves perplexed with the same question.

"What means that wreath?" asked several of the company, while viewing the decorations of the table.

They alluded to a wreath of cypress, which was held on high by a skeleton arm, protruding from within the black mantle.

"It is a crown," said one of the stewards, "not for the worthiest, but for the wofulest, when he shall prove his claim to it."

The guest earliest bidden to the festival was a man of soft and gentle character, who had not energy to struggle against the heavy despondency to which his temperament rendered him liable; and therefore with nothing outwardly to excuse him from happiness, he had spent a life of quiet misery that made his blood torpid, and weighed upon his breath, and sat like a ponderous night fiend upon every throb of his unresisting heart. His wretchedness seemed as deep as his original nature, if not identical with it. It was the misfortune of a second guest to cherish within his bosom a diseased heart, which had become so wretchedly sore that the continual and unavoidable rubs of the world, the blow of an enemy, the careless jostle of a stranger, and even the faithful and loving touch of a friend, alike made ulcers in it. As is the habit of people thus afflicted, he found his chief employment in exhibiting these miserable sores to any one who would give themselves the pain

of viewing them. A third guest was a hypochondriac, whose imagination wrought necromancy in his outward and inward world, and caused him to see monstrous faces in the household fire, and dragons in the clouds of sunset, and fiends in the guise of beautiful women, and something ugly or wicked beneath all the pleasant surfaces of nature. His neighbor at table was one who, in his early youth, had trusted mankind too much, and hoped too highly in their behalf, and, in meeting with disappointments, had become desperately soured. . . .

One other guest remains to be described. He was a young man of smooth brow, fair cheek, and fashionable mien. So far as his exterior developed him, he might much more suitably have found a place at some merry Christmas table, than have been numbered among the blighted, fate-stricken, fancy-tortured set of ill-starred banqueters. Murmurs arose among the guests as they noted the glance of general scrutiny which the intruder threw over his companions. What had he to do among them? Why did not the skeleton of the dead founder of the feast unbend its rattling joints, arise, and motion the unwelcome stranger from the board? "Shameful!" said the morbid man, while a new ulcer broke out in his heart. "He comes to mock us! — we shall be the jest of his tavern friends! — he will make a farce of our miseries, and bring it out upon the stage!"

"O, never mind him!" said the hypochondriac, smiling sourly. "He shall feast from yonder tureen of viper soup; and if there is a fricassee of scorpions on the table, pray let him have his share of it. For the dessert, he shall taste the apples of Sodom. Then, if he like our Christmas fare, let him return again next year!"

"Trouble him not," murmured the melancholy man, with gentleness. "What matters it whether the consciousness of misery come a few years sooner or later? If this youth deem himself happy now, yet let him sit with us for the sake of the wretchedness to come."

The poor idiot approached the young man with that mournful aspect of vacant inquiry which his face continually wore and which caused people to say that he was always in search of his missing wits. After no little examination he touched the stranger's hand, but immediately drew back his own, shaking his head and shivering.

"Cold, cold, cold!" muttered the idiot.

The young man shivered too, and smiled.

"Gentlemen — and you, madam," said one of the stewards of the festival, "do not conceive so ill either of our caution or judgment, as to imagine that we have admitted this young stranger — Gervayse Hastings by name — without a full investigation and thoughtful balance of his claims. Trust me, not a guest at the table is better entitled to his seat."

The steward's guaranty was perforce satisfactory. The company, therefore, took their places, and addressed themselves to the serious business of the feast, but were soon disturbed by the hypochondriac, who thrust back his chair, complaining that a dish of stewed toads and vipers was set before him, and that there was green ditch water in his cup of wine. This mistake being amended, he quietly resumed his seat. The wine, as it flowed freely from the sepulchral urn, seemed to come imbued with all gloomy inspirations; so that its influence was not to cheer, but either to sink the revellers into a deeper melancholy, or elevate their spirits to an enthusiasm of wretchedness.

The conversation was various. They told sad stories about people who might have been worthy guests at such a festival as the present. They talked of grisly incidents in human history; of strange crimes, which, if truly considered, were but convulsions of agony; of some lives that had been altogether wretched, and of others, which, wearing a general semblance of happiness, had yet been deformed, sooner or later, by misfortune, as by the intrusion of a grim face at a banquet; of death-bed scenes, and what dark intimations might be gathered from the words of dying men; of suicide, and whether the more eligible mode were by halter, knife, poison, drowning, gradual starvation, or the fumes of charcoal. The majority of the guests, as is the custom with people thoroughly and profoundly sick at heart, were anxious to make their own woes the theme of discussion, and prove themselves most excellent in anguish. The misanthropist went deep into the philosophy of evil, and wandered about in the darkness, with now and then a gleam of discolored light hovering on ghastly shapes and horrid scenery. Many a miserable thought, such as men have stumbled upon from age to age, did he now rake up again, and gloat over it as an inestimable gem, a diamond, a treasure far preferable to those bright, spiritual revelations of a better world, which are like precious stones from heaven's pavement. And then, amid his lore of wretchedness, he hid his face and wept.

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The banquet drew to its conclusion, and the guests departed. Scarcely had they stepped across the threshold of the hall, when the scene that had there passed seemed like the vision of a sick fancy, or an exhalation from a

stagnant heart. Now and then, however, during the year that ensued, these melancholy people caught glimpses of one another, transient, indeed, but enough to prove that they walked the earth with the ordinary allotment of reality. Sometimes a pair of them came face to face, while stealing through the evening twilight, enveloped in their sable cloaks. Sometimes they casually met in churchyards. Once, also, it happened that two of the dismal banqueters mutually started at recognizing each other in the noonday sunshine of a crowded street, stalking there like ghosts astray. Doubtless they wondered why the skeleton did not come abroad at noonday too.

But whenever the necessity of their affairs compelled these Christmas guests into the bustling world, they were sure to encounter the young man who had so unaccountably been admitted to the festival. They saw him among the gay and fortunate; they caught the sunny sparkle of his eye; they heard the light and careless tones of his voice, and muttered to themselves with such indignation as only the aristocracy of wretchedness could kindle — "The traitor! The vile impostor! Providence, in its own good time, may give him a right to feast among us!" But the young man's unabashed eye dwelt upon their gloomy figures as they passed him, seeming to say, perchance with somewhat of a sneer, "First, know my secret! — then, measure your claims with mine!"

The step of Time stole onward, and soon brought merry Christmas round again, with glad and solemn worship in the churches, and sports, games, festivals, and everywhere the bright face of joy beside the household fire. Again likewise the hall, with its curtains of dusky purple, was illuminated by the death torches gleaming on the

sepulchral decorations of the banquet. The veiled skeleton sat in state, lifting the cypress wreath above its head, as the guerdon of some guest illustrious in the qualifications which there claimed precedence. As the stewards deemed the world inexhaustible in misery, and were desirous of recognizing it in all its forms, they had not seen fit to reassemble the company of the former year. New faces now threw their gloom across the table.

There was a man of nice conscience, who bore a blood stain in his heart — the death of a fellow-creature — which, for his more exquisite torture, had chanced with such a peculiarity of circumstances, that he could not absolutely determine whether his will had entered into the deed or not. Therefore, his whole life was spent in the agony of an inward trial for murder, with a continual sifting of the details of his terrible calamity, until his mind had no longer any thought, nor his soul any emotion, disconnected with it. There was a mother, too — but a desolation now — who, many years before, had gone out on a pleasure party, and, returning, found her infant smothered in its little bed. And ever since she has been tortured with the fantasy that her buried baby lay smothering in its coffin. Then there was an aged lady, who had lived from time immemorial with a constant tremor quivering through her frame. It was terrible to discern her dark shadow tremulous upon the wall; her lips, likewise, were tremulous; and the expression of her eye seemed to indicate that her soul was trembling too. Owing to the bewilderment and confusion which made almost a chaos of her intellect, it was impossible to discover what dire misfortune had thus shaken her nature to its depths; so that the stewards had admitted her to the table, not

from any acquaintance with her history, but on the safe testimony of her miserable aspect. Some surprise was expressed at the presence of a bluff, red-faced gentleman, a certain Mr. Smith, who had evidently the fat of many a rich feast within him, and the habitual twinkle of whose eye betrayed a disposition to break forth into uproarious laughter for little cause or none. It turned out, however, that with the best possible flow of spirits, our poor friend was afflicted with a physical disease of the heart, which threatened instant death on the slightest cachinnatory indulgence, or even that titillation of the bodily frame produced by merry thoughts. In this dilemma he had sought admittance to the banquet, on the ostensible plea of his irksome and miserable state, but, in reality, with the hope of imbibing a life-preserving melancholy. . . .

And now appeared a figure which we must acknowledge as our acquaintance of the former festival. It was Gervayse Hastings, whose presence had then caused so much question and criticism, and who now took his place with the composure of one whose claims were satisfactory to himself and must needs be allowed by others. Yet his easy and unruffled face betrayed no sorrow. The well-skilled beholders gazed a moment into his eyes and shook their heads, to miss the unuttered sympathy — the countersign, never to be falsified — of those whose hearts are cavern mouths, through which they descend into a region of illimitable woe and recognize other wanderers there.

"Who is this youth?" asked the man with a blood stain on his conscience. "Surely he has never gone down into the depths! I know all the aspects of those who have passed through the dark valley. By what right is he among us?"

"Ah, it is a sinful thing to come hither without a sorrow," murmured the aged lady, in accents that partook of the eternal tremor which pervaded her whole being. "Depart, young man! Your soul has never been shaken. I tremble so much the more to look at you."

"His soul shaken! No; I'll answer for it," said bluff Mr. Smith, pressing his hand upon his heart and making himself as melancholy as he could, for fear of a fatal explosion of laughter. "I know the lad well; he has as fair prospects as any young man about town, and has no more right among us miserable creatures than the child unborn. He never was miserable and probably never will be!"

"Our honored guests," interposed the stewards, "pray have patience with us, and believe, at least, that our deep veneration for the sacredness of this solemnity would preclude any wilful violation of it. Receive this young man to your table. It may not be too much to say, that no guest here would exchange his own heart for the one that beats within that youthful bosom!"

"I'd call it a bargain, and gladly, too," muttered Mr. Smith, with a perplexing mixture of sadness and mirthful conceit. "A plague upon their nonsense! My own heart is the only really miserable one in the company; it will certainly be the death of me at last."

Nevertheless, as on the former occasion, the judgment of the stewards being without appeal, the company sat down. The obnoxious guest made no more attempt to obtrude his conversation on those about him, but appeared to listen to the table talk with peculiar assiduity, as if some inestimable secret, otherwise beyond his reach, might be conveyed in a casual word. And in truth, to those who

could understand and value it, there was rich matter in the upgushings and outpourings of these initiated souls to whom sorrow had been a talisman, admitting them into spiritual depths which no other spell can open. Sometimes out of the midst of densest gloom there flashed a momentary radiance, pure as crystal, bright as the flame of stars, and shedding such a glow upon the mysteries of life that the guests were ready to exclaim, "Surely the riddle is on the point of being solved!" At such illuminated intervals the saddest mourners felt it to be revealed that mortal griefs are but shadowy and external; no more than the sable robes voluminously shrouding a certain divine reality and thus indicating what might otherwise be altogether invisible to mortal eye.

"Just now," remarked the trembling old woman, "I seemed to see beyond the outside. And then my everlasting tremor passed away!"

"Would that I could dwell always in these momentary gleams of light!" said the man of stricken conscience. "Then the blood stain in my heart would be washed clean away."

This strain of conversation appeared so unintelligibly absurd to good Mr. Smith, that he burst into precisely the fit of laughter which his physicians had warned him against, as likely to prove instantaneously fatal. In effect, he fell back in his chair a corpse, with a broad grin upon his face, while his ghost, perchance, remained beside it bewildered at its unpremeditated exit. This catastrophe of course broke up the festival.

"How is this? You do not tremble?" observed the tremulous old woman to Gervayse Hastings, who was gazing at the dead man with singular intentness. "Is

it not awful to see him so suddenly vanish out of the midst of life — this man of flesh and blood, whose earthly nature was so warm and strong? There is a never-ending tremor in my soul, but it trembles afresh at this! And you are calm!"

"Would that he could teach me somewhat!" said Gervayse Hastings, drawing a long breath. "Men pass before me like shadows on the wall; their actions, passions, feelings are flickerings of the light, and then they vanish! Neither the corpse, nor yonder skeleton, nor this old woman's everlasting tremor, can give me what I seek."

And then the company departed.

We cannot linger to narrate, in such detail, more circumstances of these singular festivals, which in accordance with the founder's will, continued to be kept with the regularity of an established institution. In process of time the stewards adopted the custom of inviting, from far and near, those individuals whose misfortunes were prominent above other men's, and whose mental and moral development might, therefore, be supposed to possess a corresponding interest. The exiled noble of the French Revolution, and the broken soldier of the Empire, were alike represented at the table. Fallen monarchs, wandering about the earth, have found places at that forlorn and miserable feast. The statesman, when his party flung him off, might, if he chose it, be once more a great man for the space of a single banquet. Aaron Burr's name appears on the record at a period when his ruin — the profoundest and most striking, with more of moral circumstances in it than that of almost any other man — was complete in his lonely age. Stephen Girard, when his wealth weighed upon him like a mountain, once sought admittance of his own accord. It is not probable,

however, that these men had any lesson to teach in the lore of discontent and misery which might not equally well have been studied in the common walks of life. Illustrious unfortunates attract a wider sympathy, not because their griefs are more intense, but because, being set on lofty pedestals, they the better serve mankind as instances and bywords of calamity.

It concerns our present purpose to say that, at each successive festival, Gervayse Hastings showed his face gradually changing from the smooth beauty of his youth to the thoughtful comeliness of manhood, and thence to the bald, impressive dignity of age. He was the only individual invariably present. Yet on every occasion there were murmurs, both from those who knew his character and position, and from them whose hearts shrank back as denying his companionship in their mystic fraternity.

"Who is this impassive man?" had been asked a hundred times. "Has he suffered? Has he sinned? There are no traces of either. Then wherefore is he here?"

"You must inquire of the stewards or of himself," was the constant reply. "We seem to know him well here in our city and know nothing of him but what is creditable and fortunate. Yet hither he comes, year after year, to this gloomy banquet, and sits among the guests like a marble statue. Ask yonder skeleton; perhaps that may solve the riddle!"

It was in truth a wonder. The life of Gervayse Hastings was not merely a prosperous, but a brilliant one. Everything had gone well with him. He was wealthy, far beyond the expenditure that was required by habits of magnificence, a taste of rare purity and cultivation, a love of travel, a scholar's instinct to collect a splendid library, and, more-

over, what seemed a magnificent liberality to the distressed. He had sought happiness, and not vainly, if a lovely and tender wife, and children of fair promise, could insure it. He had, besides, ascended above the limit which separates the obscure from the distinguished, and had won a stainless reputation in affairs of the widest public importance. Not that he was a popular character, or had within him the mysterious attributes which are essential to that species of success. To the public he was a cold abstraction, wholly destitute of those rich hues of personality, that living warmth, and the peculiar faculty of stamping his own heart's impression on a multitude of hearts by which the people recognize their favorites. And it must be owned that, after his most intimate associates had done their best to know him thoroughly, and love him warmly, they were startled to find how little hold he had upon their affections. They approved, they admired, but still in those moments when the human spirit most craves reality, they shrank back from Gervayse Hastings, as powerless to give them what they sought. It was the feeling of distrustful regret with which we should draw back the hand after extending it, in an illusive twilight, to grasp the hand of a shadow upon the wall.

As the superficial fervency of youth decayed, this peculiar effect of Gervayse Hastings's character grew more perceptible. His children, when he extended his arms, came coldly to his knees, but never climbed them of their own accord. His wife wept secretly, and almost adjudged herself a criminal because she shivered in the chill of his bosom. He, too, occasionally appeared not unconscious of the chillness of his moral atmosphere, and willing, if it might be so, to warm himself at a kindly fire. But age stole onward and benumbed him more and more. As the hoar-frost began

to gather on him his wife went to her grave, and was doubtless warmer there; his children either died or were scattered to different homes of their own; and old Gervayse Hastings, unscathed by grief, — alone, but needing no companionship, — continued his steady walk through life, and still on every Christmas day attended at the dismal banquet. His privilege as a guest had become prescriptive now. Had he claimed the head of the table, even the skeleton would have been ejected from its seat.

Finally, at the merry Christmas-tide, when he had numbered fourscore years complete, this pale, high-browed, marble-featured old man once more entered the long-frequented hall, with the same impassive aspect that had called forth so much dissatisfied remark at his first attendance. Time, except in matters merely external, had done nothing for him, either of good or evil. As he took his place he threw a calm, inquiring glance around the table, as if to ascertain whether any guest had yet appeared, after so many unsuccessful banquets, who might impart to him the mystery — the deep, warm secret — the life within the life — which, whether manifested in joy or sorrow, is what gives substance to a world of shadows.

"My friends," said Gervayse Hastings, assuming a position which his long conversance with the festival caused to appear natural, "you are welcome! I drink to you all in this cup of sepulchral wine."

The guests replied courteously, but still in a manner that proved them unable to receive the old man as a member of their sad fraternity. It may be well to give the reader an idea of the present company at the banquet.

One was formerly a clergyman, enthusiastic in his profession, and apparently of the genuine dynasty of those old

puritan divines whose faith in their calling, and stern exercise of it, had placed them among the mighty of the earth. But yielding to the speculative tendency of the age, he had gone astray from the firm foundation of an ancient faith, and wandered into a cloud region, where everything was misty and deceptive, ever mocking him with a semblance of reality, but still dissolving when he flung himself upon it for support and rest. His instinct and early training demanded something steadfast; but, looking forward, he beheld vapors piled on vapors, and behind him an impassable gulf between the man of yesterday and to-day, on the borders of which he paced to and fro, sometimes wringing his hands in agony, and often making his own woe a theme of scornful merriment. This surely was a miserable man. . . .

There was a modern philanthropist, who had become so deeply sensible of the calamities of thousands and millions of his fellow-creatures, and of the impracticableness of any general measures for their relief, that he had no heart to do what little good lay immediately within his power, but contented himself with being miserable for sympathy. Near him sat a gentleman in a predicament hitherto unprecedented, but of which the present epoch probably affords numerous examples. Ever since he was of capacity to read a newspaper this person had prided himself on his consistent adherence to one political party, but, in the confusion of these latter days, had got bewildered and knew not whereabouts his party was. This wretched condition, so morally desolate and disheartening to a man who has long accustomed himself to merge his individuality in the mass of a great body, can only be conceived by such as have experienced it. His next companion was a popular



MADONNA DELLA SEDIA. *Raphael.*

orator who had lost his voice, and — as it was pretty much all that he had to lose — had fallen into a state of hopeless melancholy. The table was likewise graced by two of the gentler sex — one, a half-starved, consumptive seamstress, the representative of thousands just as wretched; the other, a woman of unemployed energy, who found herself in the world with nothing to achieve, nothing to enjoy, and nothing even to suffer. She had, therefore, driven herself to the verge of madness by dark broodings over the wrongs of her sex, and its exclusion from a proper field of action. . . .

In their own way, these were as wretched a set of people as ever had assembled at the festival. There they sat, with the veiled skeleton of the founder holding aloft the cypress wreath, at one end of the table, and at the other, wrapped in furs, the withered figure of Gervayse Hastings, stately, calm, and cold, impressing the company with awe, yet so little interesting their sympathy that he might have vanished into thin air without their once exclaiming, "Whither is he gone?"

"Sir," said the philanthropist, addressing the old man, "you have been so long a guest at this annual festival, and have thus been conversant with so many varieties of human affliction, that, not improbably, you have thence derived some great and important lessons. How blessed were your lot could you reveal a secret by which all this mass of woe might be removed!"

"I know of but one misfortune," answered Gervayse Hastings, quietly, "and that is my own."

"Your own!" rejoined the philanthropist. "And, looking back on your serene and prosperous life, how can you claim to be the sole unfortunate of the human race?"

"You will not understand it," replied Gervayse Hastings,

feebly, and with a singular inefficiency of pronunciation, and sometimes putting one word for another. "None have understood it — not even those who experience the like. It is a chillness — a want of earnestness — a feeling as if what should be my heart were a thing of vapor — a haunting perception of unreality! Thus seeming to possess all that other men have — all that other men aim at — I have really possessed nothing, neither joy nor griefs. All things, all persons — as was truly said to me at this table long and long ago — have been like shadows flickering on the wall. It was so with my wife and children — with those who seemed my friends: it is so with yourselves, whom I see now before me. Neither have I myself any real existence, but am a shadow like the rest."

"And how is it with your views of a future life?" inquired the speculative clergyman.

"Worse than with you," said the old man, in a hollow and feeble tone; "for I cannot conceive it earnestly enough to feel either hope or fear. Mine — mine is the wretchedness! This cold heart — this unreal life! Ah! it grows colder still."

It so chanced that at this juncture the decayed ligaments of the skeleton gave way, and the dry bones fell together in a heap, thus causing the dusty wreath of cypress to drop upon the table. The attention of the company being thus diverted for a single instant from Gervayse Hastings, they perceived, on turning again towards him, that the old man had undergone a change. His shadow had ceased to flicker on the wall.

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

A Christmas Eve in Exile

IT is Christmas Eve in a large city of Bavaria. Along the streets, white with snow, in the confusion of the fog, among the rattle of carriages and the ringing of bells, the crowd hurries joyously towards the open-air roast-meat shops, the holiday stalls and booths. Brushing with a light rustling sound the shops decorated with ribbons and flowers, branches of green holly and whole spruce trees covered with pendants move along in the arms of passers-by, rising above all the heads, like a shadow of the Thuringian Forests, a touch of nature in the artificial life of winter. Night is falling. Over there, behind the gardens of the "Résidence," one sees still a glow of the setting sun, deep red through the fog; and throughout the city there is such gayety, so many festive preparations, that every light that flames up at a window seems to hang on a Christmas tree. But this is no ordinary Christmas. We are in the year of Grace 1870; and the birth of Christ is but a pretext the more to drink to the illustrious Van der Than, and to celebrate the triumph of Bavarian arms. Noël! Noël! Even the Jews in the lower city join in the merriment. There is old Augustus Cahn, turning the corner at "The Blue Grape" on the run. Never have his ferret-eyes sparkled as to-night. Never has his brush-like queue wriggled so merrily. On his sleeve, worn threadbare by the cords of his wallet, hangs a tidy little basket, full to the brim, covered with a yellow napkin, with the neck of a bottle and a sprig of holly peeping out.

What the deuce is the old usurer going to do with all that? Is he, too, going to celebrate Christmas? Will he gather together his friends, his family, to drink to the German

Fatherland? But no. Every one knows well that old Cahn has no Fatherland. *His* Fatherland is his strong-box. He has neither family nor friends; nothing but creditors. His sons, his associates too, left three months ago with the army. Down there behind the gun-carriages of the home guard they ply their trade, selling brandy, buying watches, and at night, after a battle, going out to rifle the pockets of the dead and to empty the knapsacks that have fallen in the trenches by the way. Father Cahn, too old to follow his children, has remained in Bavaria, and there he does a magnificent business with the French prisoners. Always prowling about the barracks, it is he who buys watches, medals, money-orders. One sees him gliding through the hospitals and among the ambulances. He approaches the bedside of the wounded and asks them very softly in his hideous gibberish: —

"Haf you anydings to zell?"

Look! At this very moment, when you see him trotting so briskly with his basket under his arm, it is because the Military Hospital closes at five o'clock; and there are two Frenchmen waiting up there in that big black building, with its narrow-barred windows, where Christmas to illumine its coming has only the pale lights which guard the bedside of the dying. . . .

These two Frenchmen are Salvette and Bernadou. They are infantrymen, two Provençals of the same village, enrolled in the same battalion, and wounded by the same shell. Only, Salvette is the stronger; and already he begins to get up, to make some steps from his bed to the window. Bernadou, for his part, will not recover. Between the wan curtains of his hospital cot his face looks thinner, more languid, day by day; and when he speaks of

his country, of the return, it is with the sad smile of the invalid, in which there is more of resignation than of hope. Nevertheless, to-day he is a little animated, thinking of the beautiful Christmas festival, which in our Provençal country seems like a great bonfire lighted in the midst of winter, recalling the midnight mass, the church decorated, glowing with light, the dark village streets filled with people. then the long watch about the table, the three traditional torches, the "*aioli*," [1] the snails, and the pretty ceremony of the Yule log, which the grandfather carries about the house, and anoints with steaming wine.

"Ah! my poor Salvette, what a sad Christmas we are going to have this year! . . . If we only had enough to buy a white roll and a bottle of claret! . . . How happy I would be if, once more, before taps sound for me, I could drink with you over the Yule log!"

The sick man's eyes brighten as he speaks of the wine and the white bread. But how is it to be done? They have nothing left — poor fellows! — no money, no watch. To be sure, Salvette still keeps in the lining of his jacket a money-order for forty francs. But that is for the day when they shall be free; for the first halt that they make in a French inn. That money is sacred. No way to touch that. But poor Bernadou is so ill! Who knows if he will ever be able to take up the journey home? And since here is a beautiful Christmas which they can still celebrate together, were it not best to profit by it?

So, without a word to his countryman, Salvette rips open his tunic, takes out the order, and when old Cahn has come, as every morning, to make his round in the halls, after long

[1] A mayonnaise sauce richly flavored with garlic.

arguments and whispered discussions he slips into the old Jew's hand this square of paper, yellowed and stiff, smelling of powder, and stained with blood. From that moment Salvette maintains an air of mystery. He rubs his hands and laughs to himself as he looks at Bernadou. And now, as day falls, he is there on watch, his forehead pressed against the narrow panes until he sees, in the dusk of the deserted courtyard, old Augustus Cahn, all out of breath, a little basket on his arm.

This solemn midnight, which sounds from all the bells of the city, falls mournfully in this white camp of suffering. The hospital ward is silent, lighted only by the night lamps hung from the ceiling. Great wandering shadows float over the beds and the bare walls, with an incessant vibration which seems the oppressed breathing of all the sufferers stretched out there. At moments dreams talk aloud, nightmares groan, while from the street rises a vague murmur, steps and voices, confused in the cold, resonant air as if under the porch of a cathedral. One feels the devout hastening, the mystery of a religious festival, intruding upon the hour of sleep and throwing upon the darkened city the dim light of lanterns and the glow of church windows.

"Art thou asleep, Bernadou?" . . .

Very gently, on the little table near his friend's bed, Salvette has placed a bottle of Lunel wine and a round loaf — a comely Christmas loaf, in which the sprig of holly is planted upright. The sick man opens eyes darkly rimmed with fever. In the uncertain light of the night lamps and under the white reflection of the great roofs where the moon shines dazzling upon the snow, this improvised Christmas seems to him a phantasy.

"Come, comrade, wake up! . . . It shall not be said that two Provençals let Christmas Eve pass without toasting it in a cup of claret." . . . And Salvette raises him with a mother's tenderness. He fills the glasses, cuts the bread; and they drink, and talk of Provence. Little by little Bernadou rouses, becomes tender. . . . The wine, the recalling of old days. . . . With the childish spirit which comes again to the sick in their weakness, he asks Salvette to sing a Christmas carol of Provence. His comrade asks nothing better.

"Come! Which one do you want? 'The Host'? 'The Three Kings'? or 'Saint Joseph Said to Me'?"

"No. I love better 'The Shepherds.' The one we always sang at home."

"'The Shepherds' let it be." In a low voice, his head between the curtains, Salvette begins to hum. But suddenly, as he sings the last couplet, where the shepherds, coming to see Jesus in his stable, have laid their offerings of fresh eggs and cheese in the manger, and are dismissed in kindly fashion:—

"Joseph leur dit: Allons I soyez bien sages,
Tournez-vous-en et faites bon voyage.
Bergers,
Prenez votre congé, . . ."

poor Bernadou slips and falls heavily upon his pillow. His comrade, thinking he sleeps, calls him, shakes him. But the sick man remains motionless; and the little sprig of holly across the stiff coverlet seems already the green palm that is laid on the pillow of the dead.

Salvette understands. Then, all in tears, and a little intoxicated with the feast and with so great a sorrow, he

takes up again in full voice, in the silence of the ward, the joyous refrain of Provence: —

"Shepherds,
Take your leave!"

ALPHONSE DAUDET

The Rehearsal of the Mummers' Play

THEN fell the great first rehearsal of the Christmas play, and Dennis Masterman found that he had been wise to take time by the forelock in this matter. The mummers assembled in the parish room, and the vicar and his sister, with Nathan Baskerville's assistance, strove to lead them through the drama.

"It's not going to be quite like the version that a kind friend has sent me, and from which your parts are written," explained Dennis. "I've arranged for an introduction in the shape of a prologue. I shall do this myself, and appear before the curtain and speak a speech to explain what it is all about. This answers Mr. Waite here, who is going to be the Turkish Knight. He didn't want to begin the piece. Now I shall have broken the ice, and then he will be discovered as the curtain rises."

Mr. Timothy Waite on this occasion, however, began proceedings, as the vicar's prologue was not yet written. He proved letter-perfect, but exceedingly nervous.

"Open your doors and let me in,
I hope your favours I shall win.
Whether I rise or whether I fall,
I'll do my best to please you all!"

Mr. Waite spoke jerkily, and his voice proved a little out of control, but everybody congratulated him.

"How he rolls his eyes to be sure," said Vivian Baskerville. "A very daps of a Turk, for sartain."

"You ought to stride about more, Waite," suggested Ned Baskerville, who had cheered up of recent days, and was now standing beside Cora and other girls destined to assist the play. "The great thing is to stride about and look alive — isn't it, Mr. Masterman?"

"We'll talk afterwards," answered Dennis. "We mustn't interfere with the action. You have got your speech off very well, Waite, but you said it much too fast. We must be slow and distinct so that not a word is missed."

Timothy, who enjoyed the praise of his friends, liked this censure less.

"As for speaking fast," he said, "the man would speak fast. Because he expects St. George will be on his tail in a minute. He says, 'I know he'll pierce my skin.' In fact, he's pretty well sweating with terror from the first moment he comes on the stage, I should reckon."

But Mr. Masterman was unprepared for any such subtle rendering of the Turkish Knight, and he only hoped that the more ancient play-actors would not come armed with equally obstinate opinions.

"We'll talk about it afterwards," he said. "Now you go off to the right, Waite, and Father Christmas comes on at the left. Mr. Baskerville — Father Christmas, please."

Nathan put his part into his pocket, marched on to the imaginary stage and bowed. Everybody cheered.

"You needn't bow," explained Dennis; but the innkeeper differed from him.

"I'm afraid I must, your reverence. When I appear

before them, the people will give me a lot of applause in their usual kindly fashion. Why, even these here — just t'other actors do, you see — so you may be sure that the countryside will. Therefore I had better practise the bow at rehearsal, if you've no great argument against it."

"All right, push on," said Dennis.

"We must really be quicker," declared Miss Masterman. "Half an hour has gone, and we've hardly started."

"Off I go, then; and I want you chaps — especially you, Vivian, and you, Jack Head, and you, Tom Gollop — to watch me acting. Acting ban't the same as ordinary talking. If I was just talking, I should say all quiet, without flinging my arms about, and walking round, and stopping, and then away again. But in acting you do all these things, and instead of merely saying your speeches, as we would just man to man, over my bar or in the street, you have to bawl 'em out so that every soul in the audience catches 'em."

Having thus explained his theory of histrionics, Mr. Baskerville started, and with immense and original emphasis, and sudden actions and gestures, introduced himself.

"Here come I, the dear old Father Christmas.
Welcome or welcome not,
I hope old Father Christmas
Will never be forgot.
A room — make room here, gallant boys,
And give us room to rhyme . . . "

Nathan broke off to explain his reading of the part.

"When I say 'make room' I fly all round the stage, as if I was pushing the people back to give me room."

He finished his speech, and panted and mopped his head.

"That's acting, and what d'you think of it?" he asked.

They all applauded vigorously excepting Mr. Gollop, who now prepared to take his part.

Nathan then left the stage and the vicar called him back.

"You don't go off," he explained. "You stop to welcome the King of Egypt."

"Beg pardon," answered the innkeeper. "But of course, so it is. I'll take my stand here."

"You bow to the King of Egypt when he comes on," declared Gollop. "He humbly bows to me, don't he, reverend Masterman?"

"Yes," said Dennis, "he bows, of course. You'll have a train carried by two boys, Gollop; but the boys aren't here to-night, as they're both down with measles — Mrs. Bassett's youngsters."

"I'll bow to you if you bow to me, Tom," said Mr. Baskerville. "That's only right."

"Kings don't bow to common people," declared the parish clerk. "Me and my pretended darter — that's Miss Cora Lintern, who's the Princess — ban't going to bow, I should hope."

"You ought to, then," declared Jack Head. "No reason because you'm King of Egypt why you should think yourself better than other folk. Make him bow, Nathan. Don't you bow to him if he don't bow to you."

"Kings do bow," declared Dennis. "You must bow to Father Christmas, Gollop."

"He must bow first, then," argued the parish clerk.

"Damn the man! turn him out and let somebody else do it!" cried Head.

"Let neither of 'em bow," suggested Mrs. Hacker suddenly. "With all this here bowing and scraping, us

shan't be done afore midnight; and I don't come in the play till the end of all things as 'tis."

"You'd better decide, your reverence," suggested Vivian. "Your word's law. I say let 'em bow simultaneous — how would that serve?"

"Excellent!" declared Dennis. "You'll bow together, please. Now, Mr. Gollop."

Thomas marched on with amazing gait, designed to be regal.

"They'll all laugh if you do it like that, Tom," complained Mr. Voysey.

"Beggar the man! And why for shouldn't they laugh?" asked Jack Head. "Thomas don't want to make 'em cry, do he? Ban't we all to be as funny as ever we can, reverend Masterman?"

"Yes," said Dennis. "In reason — in reason, Jack. But acting is one thing, and playing the fool is another."

"Oh, Lord! I thought they was the same," declared Vivian Baskerville. "Because if I've got to act the giant ——"

"Order! order!" cried the clergyman. "We *must* get on. Don't be annoyed, Mr. Baskerville, I quite see your point; but it will all come right at rehearsal."

"You'll have to tell me how to act then," said Vivian. "How the mischief can a man pretend to be what he isn't? A giant ——"

"You're as near being a live giant as you can be," declared Nathan. "You've only got to be yourself and you'll be all right."

"No," argued Jack Head. "If the man's himself, he's not funny, and nobody will laugh. I say ——"

"You can show us what you mean when you come to

your own part, Jack," said Dennis desperately. "Do get on, Gollop."

"Bow then," said Mr. Gollop to Nathan.

"I'll bow when you do, and not a minute sooner," answered the innkeeper firmly.

The matter of the bow was arranged, and Mr. Gollop, in the familiar voice with which he had led the psalms for a quarter of a century, began his part.

> "Here I, the King of Egypt, boldly do appear,
> St. Garge! St. Garge! walk in, my only son and heir;
> Walk in, St. Garge, my son, and boldly act thy part,
> That all the people here may see thy wondrous art!"

"Well done, Tom!" said Mr. Masterman, "that's splendid; but you mustn't sing it."

"I ban't singing it," answered the clerk. "I know what to do."

"All right. Now, St. George, St. George, where are you?"

"Along with the girls, as usual," snapped Mr. Gollop.

As a matter of fact Ned Baskerville was engaged in deep conversation with Princess Sabra and the Turkish Knight. He left them and hurried forward.

"Give tongue, Ned!" cried his father.

"You walk down to the footlights, and the King of Egypt will be on one side of you and Father Christmas on the other," explained the vicar.

"And you needn't look round for the females, 'cause they don't appear till later on," added Jack Head.

A great laugh followed this jest, whereon Miss Masterman begged her brother to try and keep order.

"If they are not going to be serious, we had better give it up, and waste no more time," she said.

"Don't take it like that, miss, I beg of you," urged Nathan. "All's prospering very well. We shall shape down. Go on, Ned."

Ned looked at his part, then put it behind his back, and then brought it out again.

"This is too bad, Baskerville," complained Dennis. "You told me yesterday that you knew every word."

"So I did yesterday, I'll swear to it. I said it out in the kitchen after supper to mother — didn't I, father?"

"You did," assented Vivian; "but that's no use if you've forgot it now."

"'Tis stage fright," explained Nathan. "You'll get over it."

"Think you'm talking to a maiden," advised Jack Head.

"Do get on!" cried Dennis. Then he prompted the faulty mummer.

"Here come I, St. George——"

Ned struck an attitude and started.

"Here come I, St. George; from Britain did I spring;
I'll fight the Russian Bear, my wonders to begin.
I'll pierce him through, he shall not fly;
I'll cut him — cut him — cut him ——"

"How does it go?"

"'I'll cut him down,'" prompted Dennis.

"Right!"

"I'll cut him down, or else I'll die."

"Good! Now, come on, Bear!" said Nathan.

"You and Jack Head will have to practise the fight," explained the vicar; "and at this point, or earlier, the ladies will march in to music and take their places, because,

of course, 'fair Sabra' has to see St. George conquer his foes."

"That'll suit Ned exactly!" laughed Nathan.

Then he marshalled Cora and several other young women, including May and Polly Baskerville from Cadworthy, and Cora's sister Phyllis.

"There will be a daïs lifted up at the back, you know — that's a raised platform. But for the present you must pretend these chairs are the throne. You sit by 'fair Sabra,' Thomas, and then the trumpets sound and the Bear comes on."

"Who'll play the brass music?" asked Head, "because I've got a very clever friend at Sheepstor ——"

"Leave all that to me. The music is arranged. Now, come on!"

"Shall you come on and play it like a four-footed thing, or get up on your hind-legs, Jack?" asked St. George.

"I be going to come in growling and yowling on all fours," declared Mr. Head grimly. "Then I be going to do a sort of a comic bear dance; then I be going to have a bit of fun eating a plum pudding; then I thought that me and Mr. Nathan might have a bit of comic work; and then I should get up on my hind-legs and go for St. George."

"You can't do all that," declared Dennis. "Not that I want to interfere with you, or anybody, Head; but if each one is going to work out his part and put such a lot into it, we shall never get done."

"The thing is to make 'em laugh, reverend Masterman," answered Jack with firmness. "If I just come on and just say my speech, and fight and die, there's nought in it; but if ——"

"Go on, then — go on. We'll talk afterwards."

"Right. Now you try not to laugh, souls, and I wager I'll make you giggle like a lot of zanies," promised Jack.

Then he licked his hands, went down upon them, and scrambled along upon all fours.

"Good for you, Jack! Well done! You'm funnier than anything that's gone afore!" cried Joe Voysey.

"So you be, for certain," added Mrs. Hacker.

"For all the world like my bob-tailed sheep-dog," declared Mr. Waite.

"Now I be going to sit up on my hams and scratch myself," explained Mr. Head; "then off I go again and have a sniff at Father Christmas. Then you ought to give me a plum pudding, Mr. Baskerville, and I balance it 'pon my nose."

"Well thought on!" declared Nathan. "So I will. 'Twill make the folk die of laughing to see you."

"Come on to the battle," said Dennis.

"Must be a sort of wraslin' fight," continued Head, "because the Bear's got nought but his paws. Then, I thought when I'd throwed St. George a fair back heel, he'd get up and draw his shining sword and stab me in the guts. Then I'd roar and roar, till the place fairly echoed round, and then I'd die in frightful agony."

"You ban't the whole play, Jack," said Mr. Gollop with much discontent. "You forget yourself, surely. You can't have the King of Egypt and these here other high characters all standing on the stage doing nought while you'm going through these here vagaries."

But Mr. Head stuck to his text.

"We'm here to make 'em laugh," he repeated with bull-dog determination. "And I'll do it if mortal man can do it. Then, when I've took the doctor's stuff, up I gets again and goes on funnier than ever."

"I wouldn't miss it for money, Jack," declared Vivian Baskerville. "Such a clever chap as you be, and none of us ever knowed it. You ought to go for Tom Fool to the riders. I lay you'd make tons more money than ever you will to Trowlesworthy Warren."

"By the way, who is to be the Doctor?" asked Ned Baskerville. "'Twasn't settled, Mr. Masterman."

Dennis collapsed blankly.

"By Jove! No more it was," he admitted, "and I've forgotten all about it. The Doctor's very important, too. We must have him before the next rehearsal. For the present you can read it out of the book, Mark."

Mark Baskerville was prompting, and now, after St. George and the Bear had made a pretence of wrestling, and the Bear had perished with much noise and to the accompaniment of loud laughter, Mark read the Doctor's somewhat arrogant pretensions.

"All sorts of diseases —
Whatever you pleases:
The phthisic, the palsy, the gout,
If the Devil's in, I blow him out.

* * * * * * *

"I carry a bottle of alicampane,
Here, Russian Bear, take a little of my flip-flap,
Pour it down thy tip-tap;
Rise up and fight again!"

"Well said, Mark! 'Twas splendidly given. Why for shouldn't Mark be Doctor?" asked Nathan.

"An excellent idea," declared Dennis. "I'm sure now, if the fair Queen Sabra will only put in a word ——"

Mark's engagement was known. The people clapped their hands heartily and Cora blushed.

"I wish he would," said Cora.

"Your wish ought to be his law," declared Ned. "I'm sure if 'twas me ——"

But Mark shook his head.

"I couldn't do it," he answered. "I would if I could; but when the time came, and the people, and the excitement of it all, I should break down, I'm sure I should."

"It's past ten o'clock," murmured Miss Masterman to her brother.

The rehearsal proceeded: Jack Head, as the Bear, was restored to life and slain again with much detail. Then Ned proceeded —

"I fought the Russian Bear
And brought him to the slaughter;
By that I won fair Sabra,
The King of Egypt's daughter.
Where is the man that now will me defy?
I'll cut his giblets full of holes and make his buttons fly."

"And when I've got my sword, of course 'twill be much finer," concluded Ned.

Mr. Gollop here raised an objection.

"I don't think the man ought to tell about cutting anybody's giblets full of holes," he said; "no, nor yet making their buttons fly. 'Tis very coarse, and the gentlefolks wouldn't like it."

"Nonsense, Tom," answered the vicar, "it's all in keeping with the play. There's no harm in it at all."

"Evil be to them as evil think," said Jack Head. "Now comes the song, reverend Masterman, and I was going to propose that the Bear, though he's dead as a nit, rises up on his front paws and sings with the rest, then drops down again — eh, souls?"

"They'll die of laughing if you do that, Jack," declared Vivian. "I vote for it."

But Dennis firmly refused permission and addressed his chorus.

"Now, girls, the song — everbody joins. The other songs are not written yet, so we need not bother about them till next time."

The girls, glad of something to do, sang vigorously, and the song went well. Then the Turkish Knight was duly slain, restored and slain again.

"We can't finish to-night," declared Dennis, looking at his watch, "so I'm sorry to have troubled you to come, Mrs. Hacker, and you, Voysey."

"They haven't wasted their time, however, because Head and I have showed them what acting means," said Nathan. "And when you do come on, Susan Hacker, you've got to quarrel and pull my beard, remember; then we make it up afterwards."

"We'll finish for to-night with the Giant," decreed Dennis. "Now speak your long speech, St. George, and then Mr. Baskerville can do the Giant."

Ned, who declared that he had as yet learned no more, read his next speech, and Vivian began behind the scenes —

> "Fee — fi — fo — fum!
> I smell the blood of an Englishman.
> Let him be living, or let him be dead,
> I'll grind his bones to make my bread."

"You ought to throw a bit more roughness in your voice, farmer," suggested Mr. Gollop. "If you could bring it up from the innards, 'twould sound more awful, wouldn't it, reverend Masterman?"

"And when you come on, farmer, you might pass me by where I lie dead," said Jack, "and I'll up and give you a nip in the calf of the leg, and you'll jump round, and the people will roar again."

"No," declared the vicar. "No more of you, Head, till the end. Then you come to life and dance with the French Eagle — that's Voysey. But you mustn't act any more till then."

"A pity," answered Jack. "I was full of contrivances; however, if you say so ——"

"Be I to dance?" asked Mr. Voysey. "This is the first I've heard tell o' that. How can I dance, and the rheumatism eating into my knees for the last twenty year?"

"I'll dance," said Head. "You can just turn round and round slowly."

"Now, Mr. Baskerville!"

Vivian strode on to the stage.

"Make your voice big, my dear," pleaded Gollop.

"Here come I, the Giant; bold Turpin is my name,
And all the nations round do tremble at my fame,
Where'er I go, they tremble at my sight:
No lord or champion long with me will dare to fight."

"People will cheer you like thunder, Vivian," said his brother, "because they know that the nations really did tremble at your fame when you was champion wrestler of the west."

"But you mustn't stand like that, farmer," said Jack Head. "You'm too spraddlesome. For the Lord's sake, man, try and keep your feet in the same parish!"

Mr. Baskerville bellowed with laughter and slapped his immense thigh.

"Dammy! that's funnier than anything in the play," he said. "'Keep my feet in the same parish!' Was ever a better joke heard?"

"Now, St. George, kill the Giant," commanded Dennis. "The Giant will have a club, and he'll try to smash you; then run him through the body."

"Take care you don't hit Ned in real earnest, however, else you'd settle him and spoil the play," said Mr. Voysey. "'Twould be a terrible tantarra for certain if the Giant went and whipped St. George."

"'Twouldn't be the first time, however," said Mr. Baskerville. "Would it, Ned?"

Nathan and Ned's sisters appreciated this family joke. Then Mr. Gollop advanced a sentimental objection.

"I may be wrong," he admitted, "but I can't help thinking it might be a bit ondecent for Ned Baskerville here to kill his father, even in play. You see, though everybody will know 'tis Ned and his parent, and that they'm only pretending, yet it might shock a serious-minded person here and there to see the son kill the father. I don't say I mind, as 'tis all make-believe and the frolic of a night; but — well, there 'tis."

"You'm a silly old grandmother, and never no King of Egypt was such a fool afore," said Jack. "Pay no heed to him, reverend Masterman."

Gollop snarled at Head, and they began to wrangle fiercely.

Then Dennis closed the rehearsal.

"That'll do for the present," he announced. "We've made a splendid start, and the thing to remember is that we meet here again this day week, at seven o'clock. And mind you know your part, Ned. Another of the songs will be

ready by then; and the new harmonium will have come that my sister is going to play. And do look about, all of you, to find somebody who will take the Doctor."

"We shall have the nation's eyes on us — not for the first time," declared Mr. Gollop as he tied a white wool muffler round his throat; "and I'm sure I hope one and all will do the best that's in 'em."

The actors departed; the oil lamps were extinguished, and the vicar and his sister returned home. She said little by the way, and her severe silence made him rather nervous.

"Well," he broke out at length, "jolly good, I think, for a first attempt — eh, Alice?"

"I'm glad you were satisfied, dear. Everything depends upon us — that seems quite clear, at any rate. They'll all get terribly self-conscious and silly, I'm afraid, long before the time comes. However, we must hope for the best. But I shouldn't be in a hurry to ask anybody who really matters."

EDEN PHILLPOTTS in *The Three Brothers*

X

NEW YEAR



NEW YEAR

New Year
Midnight Mass for the Dying Year
The Death of the Old Year
A New Year's Carol
New Year's Resolutions
Love and Joy come to You
Ring Out, Wild Bells
New Year's Eve, 1850
Rejoicings upon the New Year's Coming of Age
New Year's Rites in the Highlands
The Chinese New Year
New Year's Gifts in Thessaly
"Smashing" in the New Year
New Year Calls in Old New York
Sylvester Abend in Davos



– New Year –

New Year

EACH New Year is a leaf of our love's rose;
It falls, but quick another rose-leaf grows.
So is the flower from year to year the same,
But richer, for the dead leaves feed its flame.

RICHARD WATSON GILDER

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Midnight Mass for the Dying Year

YES, the Year is growing old,
And his eye is pale and bleared!
Death, with frosty hand and cold,
Plucks the old man by the beard,
Sorely, sorely!

The leaves are falling, falling,
Solemnly and slow;
Caw! caw! the rooks are calling,
It is a sound of woe,
A sound of woe!

Through woods and mountain passes
The winds, like anthems, roll;
They are chanting solemn masses,
Singing, "Pray for this poor soul,
Pray, pray!"

And the hooded clouds, like friars,
Tell their beads in drops of rain,
And patter their doleful prayers;
But their prayers are all in vain,
All in vain!

There he stands in the foul weather,
The foolish, fond Old Year,
Crowned with wild-flowers and with heather,
Like weak, despised Lear,
A king, a king!

Then comes the summer-like day,
Bids the old man rejoice!

His joy, his last! O, the old man gray
 Loveth that ever-soft voice,
 Gentle and low.

To the crimson woods he saith,
 To the voice gentle and low
Of the soft air, like a daughter's breath,
 "Pray do not mock me so!
 Do not laugh at me!"

And now the sweet day is dead;
 Cold in his arms it lies;
No stain from its breath is spread
 Over the glassy skies,
 No mist or stain!

Then, too, the Old Year dieth,
 And the forests utter a moan,
Like the voice of one who crieth
 In the wilderness alone,
 "Vex not his ghost!"

Then comes, with an awful roar,
 Gathering and sounding on,
The storm-wind from Labrador,
 The wind Euroclydon,
 The storm-wind!

Howl! howl! and from the forest
 Sweep the red leaves away!
Would, the sins that thou abhorrest,
 O Soul! could thus decay,
 And be swept away!

For there shall come a mightier blast,
There shall be a darker day;
And the stars, from heaven down-cast,
Like red leaves be swept away!
Kyrie, eleyson!
Christe, eleyson!

HENRY W. LONGFELLOW

The Death of the Old Year

FULL knee-deep lies the winter snow,
And the winter winds are wearily sighing:
Toll ye the church-bell sad and slow,
And tread softly and speak low,
For the old year lies a-dying.
Old year, you must not die;
You came to us so readily,
You lived with us so steadily,
Old year, you shall not die.

He lieth still: he doth not move:
He will not see the dawn of day.
He hath no other life above.
He gave me a friend, and a true true-love,
And the New Year will take 'em away.
Old year, you must not go;
So long as you have been with us,
Such joy as you have seen with us,
Old year, you shall not go.

He froth'd his bumpers to the brim;
A jollier year we shall not see.

But tho' his eyes are waxing dim,
And tho' his foes speak ill of him,
He was a friend to me.
 Old year, you shall not die;
 We did so laugh and cry with you,
 I've half a mind to die with you,
 Old year, if you must die.

He was full of joke and jest,
But all his merry quips are o'er.
To see him die, across the waste
His son and heir doth ride post-haste,
But he'll be dead before.
 Every one for his own.
 The night is starry and cold, my friend,
 And the New-year blithe and bold, my friend,
 Comes up to take his own.

How hard he breathes! over the snow
I heard just now the crowing cock.
The shadows flicker to and fro:
The cricket chirps: the light burns low:
'Tis nearly twelve o'clock.
 Shake hands, before you die.
 Old year, we'll dearly rue for you:
 What is it we can do for you?
 Speak out before you die.

His face is growing sharp and thin.
Alack! our friend is gone.
Close up his eyes: tie up his chin:
Step from the corpse, and let him in
That standeth there alone,

And awaiteth at the door.
There's a new foot on the floor, my friend,
And a new face at the door, my friend,
A new face at the door.

ALFRED TENNYSON

A New Year's Carol

AH! dearest Jesus, Holy Child,
Make Thee a bed, soft, undefil'd,
Within my heart, that it may be
A quiet chamber kept for Thee.
My heart for very joy doth leap,
My lips no more can silence keep,
I too must sing, with joyful tongue,
That sweetest ancient cradle song,
"Glory to God in highest Heaven,
Who unto man His Son hath given."
While angels sing, with pious mirth,
A glad New Year to all the earth.

MARTIN LUTHER

New Year's Resolutions

JANUARY 1st. — The service on New Year's Eve is the only one in the whole year that in the least impresses me in our little church, and then the very bareness and ugliness of the place and the ceremonial produce an effect that a snug service in a well-lit church never would. Last night we took Irais and Minora, and drove the three lonely miles in a sleigh. It was pitch-dark, and blowing

great guns. We sat wrapped up to our eyes in furs, and as mute as a funeral procession.

"We are going to the burial of our last year's sins," said Irais, as we started; and there certainly was a funereal sort of feeling in the air. Up in our gallery pew we tried to decipher our chorales by the light of the spluttering tallow candles stuck in holes in the woodwork, the flames wildly blown about by the draughts. The wind banged against the windows in great gusts, screaming louder than the organ, and threatening to blow out the agitated lights together. The parson in his gloomy pulpit, surrounded by a framework of dusty carved angels, took on an awful appearance of menacing Authority as he raised his voice to make himself heard above the clatter. Sitting there in the dark, I felt very small, and solitary, and defenceless, alone in a great, big, black world. The church was as cold as a tomb; some of the candles guttered and went out; the parson in his black robe spoke of death and judgment; I thought I heard a child's voice screaming, and could hardly believe it was only the wind, and felt uneasy and full of forebodings; all my faith and philosophy deserted me, and I had a horrid feeling that I should probably be well punished, though for what I had no precise idea. If it had not been so dark, and if the wind had not howled so despairingly, I should have paid little attention to the threats issuing from the pulpit; but, as it was, I fell to making good resolutions. This is always a bad sign, — only those who break them make them; and if you simply do as a matter of course that which is right as it comes, any preparatory resolving to do so becomes completely superfluous. I have for some years past left off making them on New Year's Eve, and only



THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI. *Paolo Veronese.*

the gale happening as it did reduced me to doing so last night; for I have long since discovered that, though the year and the resolutions may be new, I myself am not, and it is worse than useless putting new wine into old bottles.

"But I am not an old bottle," said Irais indignantly, when I held forth to her to the above effect a few hours later in the library, restored to all my philosophy by the warmth and light, "and I find my resolutions carry me very nicely into the spring. I revise them at the end of each month, and strike out the unnecessary ones. By the end of April they have been so severely revised that there are none left."

"There, you see I am right; if you were not an old bottle your new contents would gradually arrange themselves amiably as a part of you, and the practice of your resolutions would lose its bitterness by becoming a habit."

She shook her head. "Such things never lose their bitterness," she said, "and that is why I don't let them cling to me right into the summer. When May comes, I give myself up to jollity with all the rest of the world, and am too busy being happy to bother about anything I may have resolved when the days were cold and dark."

"And that is just why I love you," I thought. She often says what I feel.

From *Elizabeth and her German Garden*

Love and Joy come to You

HERE we come a-wassailing
Among the leaves so green,
Here we come a-wandering,
So fair to be seen.

Love and joy come to you,
And to you your wassail too,
And God bless you, and send you
A happy New Year.

We are not daily beggars
That beg from door to door,
But we are neighbours' children
Whom you have seen before.
Love and joy, &c.

Good Master and good Mistress,
As you sit by the fire,
Pray think of us poor children
Who are wandering in the mire.
Love and joy, &c.

We have a little purse
Made of ratching leather skin;
We want some of your small change
To line it well within.
Love and joy, &c.

Call up the butler of this house,
Put on his golden ring;
Let him bring us a glass of beer,
And the better we shall sing.
Love and joy, &c.

Bring us out a table,
And spread it with a cloth;
Bring us out a mouldy cheese
And some of your Christmas loaf.
Love and joy, &c.

New Year

God bless the Master of this house,
 Likewise the Mistress too,
And all the little children
 That round the table go.
 Love and joy come to you,
 And to you your wassail too,
 And God bless you, and send you
 A happy New Year.

Old English

Ring Out, Wild Bells

RING out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
 The flying cloud, the frosty light:
 The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
 Ring, happy bells, across the snow;
 The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
 For those that here we see no more;
 Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

* * * * * *

Ring out old shapes of foul disease,
 Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
 Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

ALFRED TENNYSON

New Year's Eve, 1850

THIS is the midnight of the century, — hark!
Through aisle and arch of Godminster have gone
Twelve throbs that tolled the zenith of the dark,
And mornward now the starry hands move on;
"Mornward!" the angelic watchers say,
"Passed is the sorest trial;
No plot of man can stay
The hand upon the dial;
Night is the dark stem of the lily Day."

If we, who watched in valleys here below,
Toward streaks, misdeemed of morn, our faces turned
When Vulcan glares set all the east aglow, —
We are not poorer that we wept and yearned;
Though earth swing wide from God's intent,
And though no man nor nation
Will move with full consent
In heavenly gravitation,
Yet by one Sun is every orbit bent.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

Rejoicings upon the New Year's Coming of Age

THE Old Year being dead, and the New Year coming of age, which he does, by Calendar Law, as soon as the breath is out of the old gentleman's body, nothing would serve the young spark but he must give a dinner upon the occasion, to which all the Days in the year were invited. The Festivals, whom he deputed as his stewards, were mightily taken with the notion. They had been engaged time out of mind, they said, in providing mirth and good cheer for mortals below; and it was time they should have a taste of their own bounty. It was stiffly debated among them whether the Fasts should be admitted. Some said the appearance of such lean, starved guests, with their mortified faces, would pervert the ends of the meeting. But the objection was overruled by Christmas Day, who had a design upon Ash Wednesday (as you shall hear), and a mighty desire to see how the old Domine would behave himself in his cups. Only the Vigils were requested to come with their lanterns, to light the gentlefolks home at night.

All the Days came to their day. Covers were provided for three hundred and sixty-five guests at the principal table; with an occasional knife and fork at the side-board for the Twenty-Ninth of February.

I should have told you, that cards of invitation had been issued. The carriers were the Hours; twelve little, merry, whirligig foot-pages, as you should desire to see, that went all round, and found out the persons invited well enough, with the exception of Easter Day, Shrove Tuesday, and a few such Moveables, who had lately shifted their quarters.

Well, they all met at last — foul Days, fine Days, all

sorts of Days, and a rare din they made of it. There was nothing but, Hail! fellow Day, well met — brother Day — sister Day, — only Lady Day kept a little on the aloof, and seemed somewhat scornful. Yet some said Twelfth Day cut her out and out, for she came in a tiffany suit, white and gold, like a queen on a frost-cake, all royal, glittering, and Epiphanous. The rest came, some in green, some in white — but old Lent and his family were not yet out of mourning. Rainy Days came in dripping; and sunshiny Days helped them to change their stockings. Wedding Day was there in his marriage finery, a little worse for wear. Pay Day came late, as he always does; and Doomsday sent word — he might be expected.

April Fool (as my young lord's jester) took upon himself to marshal the guests, and wild work he made with it. It would have posed old Erra Pater to have found out any given Day in the year to erect a scheme upon — good Days, bad Days, were so shuffled together, to the confounding of all sober horoscopy.

He had stuck the Twenty-First of June next to the Twenty-Second of December, and the former looked like a Maypole siding a marrow-bone. Ash Wednesday got wedged in (as was concerted) betwixt Christmas and Lord Mayor's Days. Lord! how he laid about him! Nothing but barons of beef and turkeys would go down with him — to the great greasing and detriment of his new sackcloth bib and tucker. And still Christmas Day was at his elbow, plying him with the wassail-bowl, till he roared, and hiccupp'd, and protested there was no faith in dried ling, but commended it to the devil for a sour, windy, acrimonious, censorious, hy-po-crit-crit-critical mess, and no dish for a gentleman. Then he dipt his fist into the middle of the

great custard that stood before his left-hand neighbour, and daubed his hungry beard all over with it, till you would have taken him for the Last Day in December, it so hung in icicles.

At another part of the table, Shrove Tuesday was helping the Second of September to some cock broth, — which courtesy the latter returned with the delicate thigh of a hen pheasant — so that there was no love lost for that matter. The Last of Lent was spunging upon Shrove-tide's pancakes; which April Fool perceiving, told him that he did well, for pancakes were proper to a good fry-day.

In another part, a hubbub arose about the Thirtieth of January, who, it seems, being a sour, puritanic character, that thought nobody's meat good or sanctified enough for him, had smuggled into the room a calf's head, which he had had cooked at home for that purpose, thinking to feast thereon incontinently; but as it lay in the dish, March Manyweathers, who is a very fine lady, and subject to the meagrims, screamed out there was a "human head in the platter," and raved about Herodias' daughter to that degree, that the obnoxious viand was obliged to be removed; nor did she recover her stomach till she had gulped down a Restorative, confected of Oak Apple, which the merry Twenty-Ninth of May always carries about with him for that purpose.

The King's health being called for after this, a notable dispute arose between the Twelfth of August (a zealous old Whig gentlewoman) and the Twenty-Third of April (a new-fangled lady of the Tory stamp) as to which of them should have the honour to propose it. August grew hot upon the matter, affirming time out of mind the prescriptive right to have lain with her, till her rival had basely

supplanted her; whom she represented as little better than a kept mistress, who went about in fine clothes, while she (the legitimate Birthday) had scarcely a rag, etc.

April Fool, being made mediator, confirmed the right, in the strongest form of words, to the appellant, but decided for peace' sake, that the exercise of it should remain with the present possessor. At the time, he slily rounded the first lady in the ear, that an action might lie against the Crown for bi-geny.

It beginning to grow a little duskish, Candlemas lustily bawled out for lights, which was opposed by all the Days, who protested against burning daylight. Then fair water was handed round in silver ewers, and the same lady was observed to take an unusual time in Washing herself.

May Day, with that sweetness which is peculiar to her, in a neat speech proposing the health of the founder, crowned her goblet (and by her example the rest of the company) with garlands. This being done, the lordly New Year, from the upper end of the table, in a cordial but somewhat lofty tone, returned thanks. He felt proud on an occasion of meeting so many of his worthy father's late tenants, promised to improve their farms, and at the same time to abate (if anything was found unreasonable) in their rents.

At the mention of this, the four Quarter Days involuntarily looked at each other, and smiled; April Fool whistled to an old tune of "New Brooms"; and a surly old rebel at the farther end of the table (who was discovered to be no other than the Fifth of November) muttered out, distinctly enough to be heard by the whole company, words to this effect — that "when the old one is gone, he is a fool that looks for a better." Which rudeness of his, the

guests resenting, unanimously voted his expulsion; and the malcontent was thrust out neck and heels into the cellar, as the properest place for such a *boutefeu* and firebrand as he had shown himself to be.

Order being restored — the young lord (who, to say truth, had been a little ruffled, and put beside his oratory) in as few, and yet as obliging words as possible, assured them of entire welcome; and, with a graceful turn, singling out poor Twenty-Ninth of February, that had sate all this while mumchance at the side-board, begged to couple his health with that of the good company before him — which he drank accordingly; observing, that he had not seen his honest face any time these four years, with a number of endearing expressions besides. At the same time removing the solitary Day from the forlorn seat which had been assigned him, he stationed him at his own board, somewhere between the Greek Calends and Latter Lammas.

Ash Wednesday, being now called upon for a song, with his eyes fast stuck in his head, and as well as the Canary he had swallowed would give him leave, struck up a Carol, which Christmas Day had taught him for the nounce; and was followed by the latter, who gave "Miserere" in fine style, hitting off the mumping notes and lengthened drawl of Old Mortification with infinite humour. April Fool swore they had exchanged conditions; but Good Friday was observed to look extremely grave; and Sunday held her fan before her face that she might not be seen to smile.

Shrove-tide, Lord Mayor's Day, and April Fool next joined in a glee —

Which is the properest day to drink?

in which all the Days chiming in, made a merry burden.

They next fell to quibbles and conundrums. The question being proposed, who had the greatest number of followers — the Quarter Days said, there could be no question as to that; for they had all the creditors in the world dogging their heels. But April Fool gave it in favour of the Forty Days before Easter; because the debtors in all cases outnumbered the creditors, and they kept Lent all the year.

All this while Valentine's Day kept courting pretty May, who sate next him, slipping amorous billets-doux under the table, till the Dog Days (who are naturally of a warm constitution) began to be jealous, and to bark and rage exceedingly. April Fool, who likes a bit of sport above measure, and had some pretensions to the lady besides, as being but a cousin once removed, — clapped and halloo'd them on; and as fast as their indignation cooled, those mad wags, the Ember Days, were at it with their bellows, to blow it into a flame; and all was in a ferment, till old Madam Septuagesima (who boasts herself the Mother of the Days) wisely diverted the conversation with a tedious tale of the lovers which she could reckon when she was young, and of one Master Rogation Day in particular, who was for ever putting the question to her; but she kept him at a distance, as the chronicle would tell — by which I apprehend she meant the Almanack. Then she rambled on to the Days that were gone, the good old Days, and so to the Days before the Flood — which plainly showed her old head to be little better than crazed and doited.

Day being ended, the Days called for their cloaks and greatcoats, and took their leaves. Lord Mayor's Day went off in a Mist, as usual; Shortest Day in a deep black Fog, that wrapt the little gentleman all round like a hedge-

hog. Two Vigils — so watchmen are called in heaven — saw Christmas Day safe home — they had been used to the business before. Another Vigil — a stout, sturdy patrole, called the Eve of St. Christopher — seeing Ash Wednesday in a condition little better than he should be — e'en whipt him over his shoulders, pick-a-back fashion, and Old Mortification went floating home singing —

On the bat's back do I fly,

and a number of old snatches besides, between drunk and sober, but very few Aves or Penitentiaries (you may believe me) were among them. Longest Days set off westward in beautiful crimson and gold — the rest, some in one fashion, some in another; but Valentine and pretty May took their departure together in one of the prettiest silvery twilights a Lover's Day could wish to set in.

CHARLES LAMB

New Year's Rites in the Highlands

NEW YEAR'S DAY was not in pre-Reformation times associated with any special rites. Hence Scottish Reformers, while subjecting to discipline those who observed Christmas, were willing that New Year's Day should be appropriated to social pleasures. Towards the closing hour of the 31st December each family prepared a hot pint of wassail bowl of which all the members might drink to each other's prosperity as the new year began. Hot pint usually consisted of a mixture of spiced and sweetened ale with an infusion of whiskey. Along with the drinking of the hot pint was associated the practice of *first foot*, or a neighborly greeting. After the year had commenced, each

one hastened to his neighbor's house bearing a small gift; it was deemed "unlucky" to enter "empty handed."

With New Year's Day were in some portions of the Highlands associated peculiar rites. At Strathdown the junior anointed in bed the elder members of the household with water, which the evening before had been silently drawn from "the dead and living food." Thereafter they kindled in each room, after closing the chimneys, bunches of juniper. These rites, the latter attended with much discomfort, were held to ward off pestilence and sorcery.

The direction of the wind on New Year's Eve was supposed to rule the weather during the approaching year. Hence the rhyme:

> If New Year's Eve night-wind blow south,
> It betokeneth warmth and growth;
> If west, much milk, — and fish in the sea:
> If north, much cold and storms there will be;
> If east, the trees will bear much fruit;
> If north-east, flee it, man and brute.

CHARLES ROGERS in *Social Life in Scotland*

The Chinese New Year

THE anniversary of the New Year in China follows the variations of a lunar year, falling in early February or toward the end of January; the rejoicings are continued with great spirit for a week or more.

On the last day of the old year, accounts are settled, debts cancelled, and books carefully balanced in every mercantile establishment from the largest merchants or bankers, down to the itinerant venders of cooked food and vegetable-mongers. In every house the swanpaun, or

calculating machine, is in use. This nation does not write down figures, but reckons with surprising rapidity and accuracy by the aid of a small frame of wood crossed with wires like columns and small balls strung on them for counters.

It is considered disgraceful, and almost equivalent to an act of bankruptcy, if all accounts are not settled the last day of the old year; consequently it frequently happens that articles of ornament or curiosity can be purchased at low rates in the last week of the year from the desire of merchants to sacrifice their stock rather than go without ready money. In all courts the official seals are locked in strong-boxes, till the holiday is at an end.

On the last day of the old year is observed the ancient custom of surrounding the furnace. A feast is spread in great form before males in one room, females in another; underneath the table exactly in the centre is placed a brazier filled with lighted wood or charcoal; fireworks are discharged, gilt paper burned, and the feast eaten, the younger sons serving the head of the house. After the repast there is more burning of gilt paper, and the ashes are divided, while still smouldering, into twelve heaps, which are anxiously watched. The twelve heaps are each allotted to a month, and it is believed that from the length of time it takes each heap to die completely out, can be predicted the changes of rain or drought which will be of benefit to the crops or the reverse.

The first celebration of the New Year is the offering *to heaven and earth*. A table in the principal entrance is spread with a bucket of rice, five or ten bowls of different vegetables (no meats) ten cups of tea, ten cups of wine, two large red candles, and three sticks of common incense or one

large stick of a more fragrant kind. In the wooden bucket holding the rice are stuck flowers or bits of fragrant cedar, and ten pairs of chopsticks. On the sticks are laid mock money only used at this season; to one of the sticks is suspended by a red string an almanac of the coming year; and near the centre of the table is always displayed a bowl of oranges. Then after a display of fireworks each member of the family approaches and performs homage by a ceremony of triple bowings. This is succeeded by ceremonies of veneration to ancestors and tokens of respect and reverence to living ancestors or relatives — but to the living neither incense, nor candle nor mock money is offered, — not even food except the omnipresent loose skinned orange whose colloquial name is the same as the term for "fortunate."

On New Year's Day, the houses are decorated with inscriptions which are hung at either side of the door, on the pillars or frames, and in the interior of the houses; some are suspended from long poles attached to the outside of the house. The color of the paper indicates whether during the preceding year the inmates of the house have lost a relative and if so the degree of the relation of the dead person to those within. Those who are not in mourning use a brilliant crimson paper; in many cases the word *happiness* is repeated innumerable times; on some are more ambitious mottoes: — "May I be so learned as to bear in my memory the substance of three millions of volumes," "May I know the affairs of the whole universe for six thousand years," "I will cheat no man." The monasteries declare "Our lives are pure" and the nunneries "We are grandmothers in heart."

In some parts of China there prevails a curious custom among mendicants of electing a chief who goes to each

shopkeeper and asks a donation. If that received be liberal, a piece of red paper affixed to the merchant's doorway exempts him from applications from the begging fraternity for one year. During this term of immunity there will be no annoyance from the clatter on his doorpost of the beggars' bamboo.

For the time being, business is suspended, tribunals are closed, houses are decorated, gifts interchanged, large sums expended on fireworks, and the celebration reaches full swing on the night of the Feast of Lanterns, when every dwelling in the Kingdom from the mud-walled bamboo hut, to the Emperor's palace with marble halls, are all illuminated with lanterns of every size and shape. At the end of the feast a great pyrotechnic display takes place, in the courtyard of the better class of residences, in the streets before the abodes of the middle and lower classes, each one trying to outdo the year before in the magnificence of the display, the strangeness of the devices, and the brilliancy of the fireworks. The air is illumined with millions of sparks, and the eye rests upon thousands of grotesque monsters outlined in the many colored flames.

H. C. Sirr in *China and the Chinese*

New Year's Gifts in Thessaly

NO good Thessalian would think of being absent from the liturgy on New Year's morning, and no good peasant would think of leaving behind him the pomegranate which has been exposed to the stars all night, and which they take to the church for the priest to bless. On his return home the master of each house dashes this pome-

granate on the floor as he crosses his threshold, and says as he does so, "May as many good-lucks come to my household as there are pips in this pomegranate;" and apostrophizing, so to speak, the demons of the house, he adds, "Away with you, fleas, and bugs, and evil words; and within this house may health, happiness, and the good things of this world reign supreme!"

In like manner, no good housewife would neglect to distribute sweets to her children on New Year's morning, considering that by eating them they will secure for themselves a sweet career for the rest of the year.

And many other little superstitions of a kindred nature are considered essential to the well-being of the family. In one house we entered on New Year's Day we were presented with pieces of a curious and exceedingly nasty leavened loaf, and were told that this is the New Year's cake which every family makes; into it is dropped a coin, and he who gets the coin in his slice will be the luckiest during the coming year. Every member of the family has a slice given to him — even the tiny baby, who has not the remotest chance of consuming all his; and then besides the family slices, two large ones are always cut off the cake and set on one side; one of these is said to be "for the house," which nobody eats, but when it is quite dry it is put on a shelf near the sacred pictures, which occupy a corner in every home, however humble, and is dedicated to the saints — the household gods of the old days. The other slice is for the poor, who go around with baskets on their arms on New Year's Day and collect from each household the portion which they know has been put aside for them.

Every Thessalian, however poor, gives a New Year's gift "for good luck," they say; and these gifts curiously

enough are called ἐπινομίδες — a word which we find Athenæus using as a translation of the Roman term *strena* for the same gift, which still exists in the French *étrennes* and Italian *strenne*. Even as in ancient Rome gifts were given on this day *bona ominis causa* so did we find ourselves constantly presented with something on New Year's Day — nuts, apples, dried figs, and things of a like nature, which caused our pockets to become inconveniently crowded. I fancy it was much the same in Roman days and probably earlier as it is now in out of the way corners of Greece. We know how on New Year's Day clients sent presents to their patrons — slaves to the lords, friends to friends, and the people to the Emperor — and that Caligula, who was never a rich man, took advantage of this custom and made known that on New Year's Day he wanted a dower for his daughter, which resulted in such piles of gold being brought that he walked barefoot upon them at his palace door.

The custom of giving New Year's gifts in Rome grew as great a nuisance as wedding presents bid fair to become with us, and sumptuary laws had to be passed to restrict the lavish expenditure in them, and the earlier Christian divines took occasion to abuse them hotly, St. Augustine calling New Year's gifts "diabolical" and Chrysostom preaching that the first of the year was a "Satanic extravagance."

Wishing to Christianize a pagan custom as they always tried to do, these earlier divines invented Christmas gifts as a substitute. Wherefore we unfortunate dwellers in the West have the survival of both Christmas and New Year's gifts; in Greece Christmas gifts are unknown; but there exists not in Greece a man, however poor, who does not

make an effort to give his friends a gift on the day of the Kalends.

J. Theodore Bent

"Smashing" in the New Year

THE Old Year went out with much such a racket as we make nowadays, but of quite a different kind. We did not blow the New Year in, we "smashed" it in. When it was dark on New Year's Eve, we stole out with all the cracked and damaged crockery of the year that had been hoarded for the purpose and, hieing ourselves to some favorite neighbor's door, broke our pots against it. Then we ran, but not very far or very fast, for it was part of the game that if one was caught at it, he was to be taken in and treated to hot doughnuts. The smashing was a mark of favor, and the citizen who had most pots broken against his door was the most popular man in town. When I was in the Latin School a cranky burgomaster, whose door had been freshly painted, gave orders to the watchmen to stop it, and gave them an unhappy night, for they were hard put to it to find a way it was safe to look, with the streets full of the best citizens in town, and their wives and daughters, sneaking singly by with bulging coats on their way to salute a friend. That was when our mothers, those who were not out smashing in the New Year, came out strong after the fashion of mothers. They baked more doughnuts than ever that night, and beckoned the watchman in to the treat; and there he sat, blissfully deaf while the street rang with the thunderous salvos of our raids; until it was discovered that the burgomaster himself was on post, when there was a sudden rush from kitchen doors and a great scurrying through the streets that grew strangely silent.

The town had its revenge, however. The burgomaster, returning home in the midnight hour, stumbled in his gate over a discarded Christmas-tree hung full of old boots and many black and sooty pots that went down round him with a great smash as he upset it, so that his family came running out in alarm to find him sprawling in the midst of the biggest celebration of all. His dignity suffered a shock which he never quite got over. But it killed the New Year's fun, too. For he was really a good fellow, and then he was the burgomaster and chief of police to boot. I suspect the fact was that the pot-smashing had run its course. Perhaps the supply of pots was giving out; we began to use tinware more about that time. That was the end of it, anyhow.

JACOB RIIS in *The Old Town*

New Year Calls in Old New York

FROM old Dutch times to the middle of the nineteenth century New Year's Day in New York was devoted to an universal interchange of visits. Old friendships were renewed, family differences settled, a hearty welcome extended even to strangers of presentable appearance.

The following is an entry in Tyrone Powers the actor's diary for January 1, 1834: "On this day from an early hour every door in New York is open and all the good things possessed by the inmates paraded in lavish profusion. Every sort of vehicle is put in requisition. At an early hour a gentleman of whom I had a slight knowledge entered my room, accompanied by an elderly person I had never before seen, and who, on being named, excused himself for adopting such a frank mode of making my acquaintance.

which he was pleased to add he much desired, and at once requested me to fall in with the custom of the day, whose privilege he had thus availed himself of, and accompany him on a visit to his family.

"I was the last man on earth likely to decline an offer made in such a spirit; so entering his carriage, which was waiting, we drove to his house on Broadway, where, after being presented to a very amiable lady, his wife, and a pretty gentle-looking girl, his daughter, I partook of a sumptuous luncheon, drank a glass of champagne, and on the arrival of other visitors, made my bow, well pleased with my visit.

"My host now begged me to make a few calls with him, explaining, as we drove along, the strict observances paid to this day throughout the State, and tracing the excellent custom to the early Dutch colonists. I paid several calls in company with my new friend, and at each place met a hearty welcome, when my companion suggested that I might have some compliments to make on my own account, and so leaving me, begged me to consider his carriage perfectly at my disposal. I left a card or two and made a couple of hurried visits, then returned to my hotel to think over the many beneficial effects likely to grow out of such a charitable custom which makes even the stranger sensible of the benevolent influence of this kindly day, and to wish for its continued observance."

At the period of which Power speaks there were great feasts spread in many houses, and the traditions of tremendous Dutch eating and drinking were faithfully observed. Special houses were noted for particular forms of entertainment. At one it was eggnog, at another rum punch; at this one, pickled oysters, at that, boned turkey,

or marvellous chocolate, or perfect Mocha coffee; or for the select *cognoscenti* a drop of old Madeira as delicate in flavor as the texture of the glass from which it was sipped. At all houses there were the New Year's cakes, in the form of an Egyptian *cartouche*, and in later and more degenerate days relays of champagne-bottles appeared, — the coming in of the lower empire.

Then followed the gradual breaking down of all the lines of conventionality into a wild and unseemly riot of visits. New Year's Day took on the character of a rabid and untamed race against time. A procession, each of whose component parts was made up of two or three young men in an open barouche, with a pair of steaming horses and a driver more or less under the influences of the hilarity of the day, would rattle from one house to another all day long. The visitors would jump out of the carriage, rush into the house, and reappear in a miraculously short space of time. The ceremony of calling was a burlesque. There was a noisy, hilarious greeting, a glass of wine was swallowed hurriedly, everybody shook hands all around, and the callers dashed out, rushed into the carriage, and were driven hurriedly to the next house.

A reaction naturally set in which ended in the almost complete disuse of the custom of New Year's Calls.

W. S. Walsh in *Curiosities of Popular Customs*

Sylvester Abend in Davos

IT is ten o'clock upon Sylvester Abend, or New Year's Eve. Herr Buol sits with his wife at the head of his long table. His family and serving-folk are around him. There is his mother, with little Ursula, his child, upon her

knee. The old lady is the mother of four comely daughters and nine stalwart sons, the eldest of whom is now a grizzled man. Besides our host, four of the brothers are here to-night; the handsome melancholy Georg, who is so gentle in his speech; Simeon, with his diplomatic face; Florian, the student of medicine; and my friend, colossal-breasted Christian. Palmy came a little later, worried with many cares, but happy to his heart's core. No optimist was ever more convinced of his philosophy than Palmy. After them, below the salt, were ranged the knechts and porters, the marmiton from the kitchen, and innumerable maids. The board was tessellated with plates of birnen-brod and eier-brod, kuchli and cheese and butter; and Georg stirred grampampuli in a mighty metal bowl. For the uninitiated, it may be needful to explain these Davos delicacies. Birnen-brod is what the Scotch would call a "bun," or massive cake, composed of sliced pears, almonds, spices, and a little flour. Eier-brod is a saffron-coloured sweet bread, made with eggs; and kuchli is a kind of pastry, crisp and flimsy, fashioned into various devices of cross, star, and scroll. Grampampuli is simply brandy burnt with sugar, the most unsophisticated punch I ever drank from tumblers. The frugal people of Davos, who live on bread and cheese and dried meat all the year, indulge themselves but once with these unwonted dainties in the winter.

The occasion was cheerful, and yet a little solemn. The scene was feudal. For these Buols are the scions of a warrior race: —

> "A race illustrious for heroic deeds;
> Humbled, but degraded."

During the six centuries through which they have lived

nobles in Davos, they have sent forth scores of fighting men to foreign lands, ambassadors to France and Venice and the Milanese, governors to Chiavenna and Bregaglia and the much-contested Valtelline. Members of their house are Counts of Buol-Schauenstein in Austria, Freiherrs of Muhlingen and Berenberg in the now German Empire. They keep the patent of nobility conferred on them by Henri IV. Their ancient coat — parted per pale azure and argent, with a dame of the fourteenth century bearing in her hand a rose, all counterchanged — is carved in wood and monumental marble on the churches and old houses hereabouts. And from immemorial antiquity the Buol of Davos has sat thus on Sylvester Abend with family and folk around him, summoned from alp and snowy field to drink grampampuli and break the birnen-brod.

These rites performed, the men and maids began to sing — brown arms lounging on the table, and red hands folded in white aprons — serious at first in hymn-like cadences, then breaking into wilder measures with a jodel at the close. There is a measured solemnity in the performance, which strikes the stranger as somewhat comic. But the singing was good; the voices strong and clear in tone, no hesitation and no shirking of the melody. It was clear that the singers enjoyed the music for its own sake, with half-shut eyes, as they take dancing, solidly, with deep-drawn breath, sustained and indefatigable. But eleven struck; and the two Christians, my old friend and Palmy, said we should be late for church. They had promised to take me with them to see bell-ringing in the tower. All the young men of the village meet, and draw lots in the Stube of the Rathhaus. One party tolls the old year out, the other rings the new year in. He who comes last is sconced three litres of

Veltliner for the company. This jovial fine was ours to pay to-night.

When we came into the air we found a bitter frost; the whole sky clouded over; a north wind whirling snow from alp and forest through the murky gloom. The benches and broad walnut tables of the Rathhaus were crowded with men in shaggy homespun of brown and grey frieze. Its low wooden roof and walls enclosed an atmosphere of smoke, denser than the eternal snow-drift. But our welcome was hearty, and we found a score of friends. Titanic Fopp, whose limbs are Michelangelesque in length; spectacled Morosani; the little tailor Kramer, with a French horn on his knees; the puckered forehead of the Baumeister; the Troll-shaped postman; peasants and woodmen, known on far excursions upon pass and upland valley. Not one but carried on his face the memory of winter strife with avalanche and snow-drift, of horses struggling through Fluela whirlwinds, and wine-casks tugged across Bernina, and haystacks guided down precipitous gullies at thundering speed 'twixt pine and pine, and larches felled in distant glens beside the frozen watercourses. Here we were, all met together for one hour from our several homes and occupations, to welcome in the year with clinked glasses and cries of Prosit Neujahr!

The tolling bells above us stopped. Our turn had come. Out into the snowy air we tumbled, beneath the row of wolves' heads that adorn the pent-house roof. A few steps brought us to the still God's acre, where the snow lay deep and cold upon high-mounded graves of many generations. We crossed it silently, bent our heads to the low Gothic arch, and stood within the tower. It was thick darkness there. But far above, the bells began again to clash and

jangle confusedly, with volleys of demoniac joy. Successive flights of ladders, each ending in a giddy platform hung across the gloom, climb to the height of some hundred and fifty feet; and all their rungs were crusted with frozen snow, deposited by trampling boots. For up and down these stairs, ascending and descending, moved other than angels — the frieze-jacketed Burschen, Grisens bears, rejoicing in their exercise, exhilarated with the tingling noise of beaten metal. We reached the first room safely, guided by firm-footed Christian, whose one candle just defined the rough walls and the slippery steps. There we found a band of boys pulling ropes that set the bells in motion. But our destination was not reached. One more aerial ladder, perpendicular in darkness, brought us swiftly to the home of sound. It is a small square chamber, where the bells are hung, filled with the interlacement of enormous beams, and pierced to north and south by open windows, from whose parapets I saw the village and the valley spread beneath. The fierce wind hurried through it, charged with snow, and its narrow space thronged with men. Men on the platform, men on the window-sills, men grappling the bells with iron arms, men brushing by to reach the stairs, crossing, re-crossing, shouldering their mates, drinking red wine from gigantic beakers, exploding crackers, firing squibs, shouting and yelling in corybantic chorus. They yelled and shouted, one could see it by their open mouths and glittering eyes; but not a sound from human lungs could reach our ears. The overwhelming incessant thunder of the bells drowned all. It thrilled the tympanum, ran through the marrow of the spine, vibrated in the inmost entrails. Yet the brain was only steadied and excited by this sea of brazen noise. After a few moments I knew the place and felt at home in it.

Then I enjoyed a spectacle which sculptors might have envied. For they ring the bells in Davos after this fashon: — The lads below set them going with ropes. The men above climb in pairs on ladders to the beams from which they are suspended. Two mighty pine-trees, roughly squared and built into the walls, extend from side to side across the belfry. Another, from which the bells hang, connects these massive trunks at right angles. Just where the central beam is wedged into the two parallel supports, the ladders reach from each side of the belfry, so that, bending from the higher rung of the ladder, and leaning over, stayed upon the lateral beam, each pair of men can keep one bell in movement with their hands. Each comrade plants one leg upon the ladder, and sets the other knee firmly athwart the horizontal pine. Then round each other's waist they twine left arm and right. The two have thus become one man. Right arm and left are free to grasp the bell's horns, sprouting at its crest beneath the beam. With a grave rhythmic motion, bending sideward in a close embrace, swaying and returning to their centre from the well-knit loins, they drive the force of each strong muscle into the vexed bell. The impact is earnest at first, but soon it becomes frantic. The men take something from each other of exalted enthusiasm. This efflux of their combined energies inspires them and exasperates the mighty resonance of metal which they rule. They are lost in a trance of what approximates to dervish passion — so thrilling is the surge of sound, so potent are the rhythms they obey. Men come and tug them by the heels. One grasps the starting thews upon their calves. Another is impatient for their place. But they strain still, locked together, and forgetful of the world. At length, they have enough: then slowly, clingingly, unclasp, turn round with

gazing eyes, and are resumed, sedately, into the diurnal round of common life. Another pair is in their room upon the beam.

The Englishman who saw those things stood looking up, enveloped in his ulster with the grey cowl thrust upon his forehead, like a monk. One candle cast a grotesque shadow of him on the plastered wall. And when his chance came, though he was but a weakling, he too climbed and for some moments hugged the beam, and felt the madness of the swinging bell. Descending, he wondered long and strangely whether he ascribed too much of feeling to the men he watched. But no, that was impossible. There are emotions deeply seated in the joy of exercise, when the body is brought into play, and masses move in concert, of which the subject is but half conscious. Music and dance, and the delirium of the battle or the chase, act thus upon spontaneous natures. The mystery of rhythm and associated energy and blood tingling in sympathy is here. It lies at the root of man's most tyrannous instinctive impulses.

It was past one when we reached home, and now a meditative man might well have gone to bed. But no one thinks of sleeping on Sylvester Abend. So there followed bowls of punch in one friend's room, where English, French, and German blent together in convivial Babel; and flasks of old Montagner in another. Palmy, at this period, wore an archdeacon's hat, and smoked a churchwarden's pipe; and neither were his own, nor did he derive anything ecclesiastical or Anglican from the association. Late in the morning we must sally forth, they said, and roam the town. For it is the custom here on New Year's night to greet acquaintances, and ask for hospitality, and no one may deny these self-invited guests. We turned out

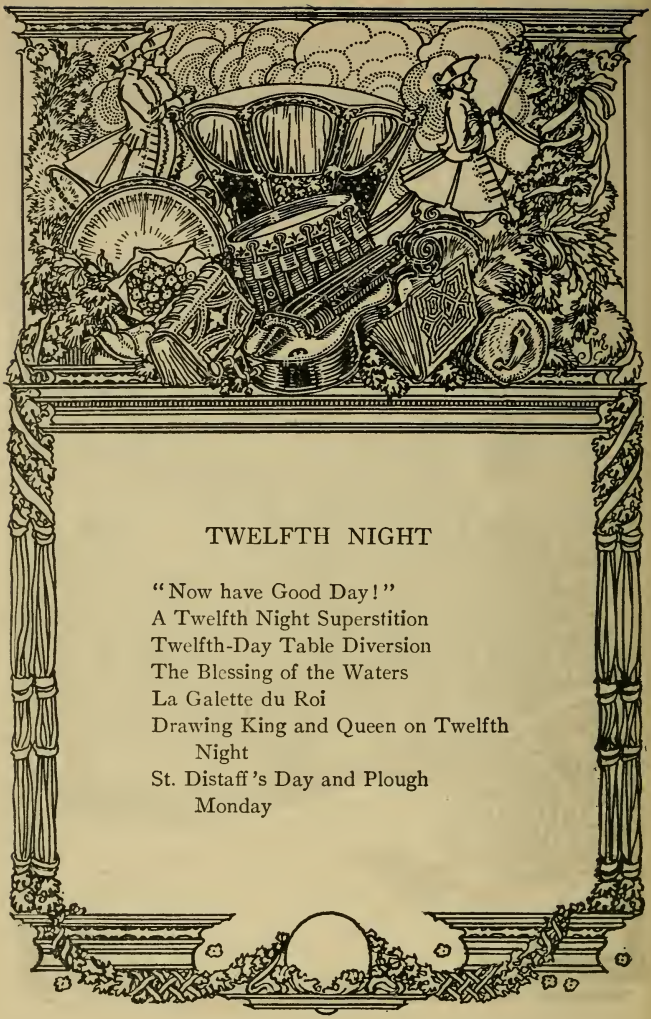
again into the grey snow-swept gloom, a curious Comus — not at all like Greeks, for we had neither torches in our hands nor rose-wreaths to suspend upon a lady's door-posts. . . .

However, upon this occasion, though we had winter wind enough, and cold enough, there was not much love in the business. My arm was firmly clenched in Christian Buol's, and Christian Palmy came behind, trolling out songs in Italian dialect, with still recurring canaille choruses, of which the facile rhymes seemed mostly made on a prolonged amu-u-u-r. It is noticeable that Italian ditties are especially designed for fellows shouting in the streets at night. . . . The tall church-tower and spire loomed up above us in grey twilight. The tireless wind still swept thin snow from fell and forest. But the frenzied bells had sunk into their twelve-month's slumber, which shall be broken only by decorous tollings at less festive times. I wondered whether they were tingling still with the heart-throbs and with the pressure of those many arms? Was their old age warmed, as mine was, with that gust of life — the young men who had clung to them like bees to lily-bells, and shaken all their locked-up tone and shrillness into the wild winter air? Alas! how many generations of the young have handled them; and they are still there, frozen in their belfry; and the young grow middle-aged, and old, and die at last; and the bells they grappled in their lust of manhood toll them to their graves, on which the tireless wind will, winter after winter, sprinkle snow from alps and forests which they knew.

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

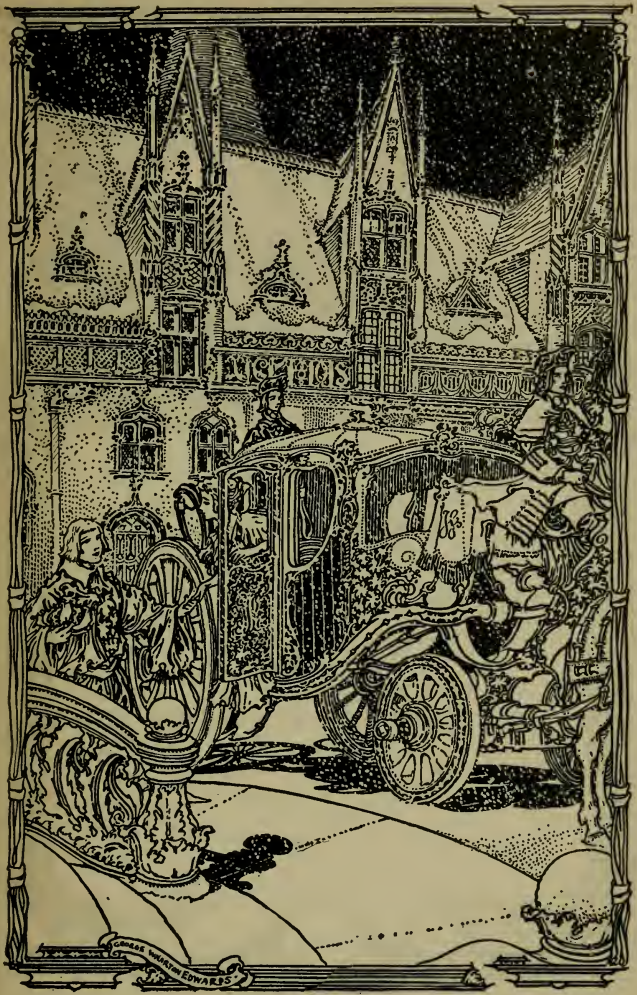
XI

TWELFTH NIGHT



TWELFTH NIGHT

"Now have Good Day!"
A Twelfth Night Superstition
Twelfth-Day Table Diversion
The Blessing of the Waters
La Galette du Roi
Drawing King and Queen on Twelfth Night
St. Distaff's Day and Plough Monday


GEORGE WILLIAM EDWARDS

DOWN with the rosemary and bays,
Down with the mistletoe;
Instead of holly, now up-raise
The greener box, for show.

The holly hitherto did sway;
Let box now domineer,
Until the dancing Easter-day,
On Easter's Eve appear.

ROBERT HERRICK

Now have Good Day

NOW have good day, now have good day!
I am Christmas, and now I go my way!

Here have I dwelt with more and less,
From Hallow-tide till Candlemas!
And now must I from you hence pass,
Now have good day!

I take my leave of King and Knight,
And Earl, Baron, and lady bright!
To wilderness I must me dight!
Now have good day!

And at the good lord of this hall,
I take my leave, and of guestes all!
Methinks I hear Lent doth call,
Now have good day!

And at every worthy officer,
Marshall, panter, and butler,
I take my leave as for this year,
Now have good day!

Another year I trust I shall
Make merry in this hall!
If rest and peace in England may fall!
Now have good day!

But often times I have heard say,
That he is loth to part away,
That often biddeth "have good day!"
Now have good day!

Now fare ye well all in-fere!
Now fare ye well for all this year,
Yet for my sake make ye good cheer!
Now have good day!

From a Balliol MS. of c. 1540

A Twelfth Night Superstition

TWICE six nights then from Christmasse, they do count with diligence,
Wherein eche maister in his house doth burne by franckensence:
And on the table settes a loafe, when night approcheth nere,
Before the coles and franckensence to be perfumed there:
First bowing down his heade he standes, and nose and eares and eyes
He smokes, and with hos mouth receyves the fume that doth arise
Whom followeth streight his wife, and doth the same full solemly,
And of their children every one and all their family;
Which doth preserve they say their teeth and nose and eye and eare
From every kind of maladie, and sicknesse all the yeare.
When every one receyued hath this odour great and small
Then one takes up the pan with coales, and franckensence and all
An other takes the loafe, whom all the rest do follow here.
And round about the house they go with torch or taper clere,
That neither bread nor meat do want, nor witch with dreadful charme

Have power to hurt their children or to do their cattell harme
There are that three nightes only do perfoure this foolish geare
To this intent, and thinke themselves in safetie all the yeare.

BARNABY GOOGE'S versification of *The Popish Kingdome*

Twelfth-Day Table Diversion

JOHN Nott, describing himself as "late cook to the dukes of Somerset, Ormond, and Batton," writes in 1726: "Ancient artists in cookery inform us that in former days, when good housekeeping was in fashion amongst the English nobility, they used either to begin or conclude their entertainments, and divert their guests with such pretty devices as these following, viz: —

A castle made of pasteboard, with gates, drawbridges, battlements and portcullises, all done over with paste, was set upon a table in a large charger, with salt laid round about it, as if it were the ground in which were stuck egg-shells full of rose or other sweet waters, the meat of the egg having been taken out by a great pin. Upon the battlement of the castle were planted Kexes covered over with paste, in the form of cannons, and made to look like brass by covering them with dutch leaf-gold. These cannons being charged with gunpowder, and trains laid so that you might fire as many as you pleased, at one touch; this castle was set at one end of the table.

Then in the middle of the table, they would set a stag made of paste, but hollow, and filled with claret wine, and a broad arrow stuck in his side; this was also set in a large

charger, with a ground made of salt with egg-shells of perfumed waters stuck in it as before.

Then at the other end of the table, they would have a ship made of pasteboard, and covered all over with paste, with masts, sails, flags, and streamers; and guns made of Kexes, covered with paste and charged with gunpowder, with a train, as in the castle. This being placed in a large charger was set upright in as it were a sea of salt, in which were also stuck egg-shells full of perfumed waters. Then betwixt the stag and castle, and the stag and ship, were placed two pies made of coarse paste, filled with bran, and washed over with saffron and the yolks of eggs; when these were baked the bran was taken out, a hole was cut in the bottom of each, and live birds put into one and frogs into the other. Then the holes were closed up with paste, and the lids neatly cut up, so that they might be easily taken off by the funnels, and adorned with gilded laurels.

These being thus prepared, and placed in order on the table, one of the ladies was persuaded to draw the arrow out of the body of the stag, which being done the claret wine issued forth like blood from a wound and caused admiration in the spectators; which being over, after a little pause, all the guns on one side of the castle were by a train discharged against the ship; and afterwards the guns of one side of the ship were discharged against the castle; then, having turned the chargers, the other sides were fired off as in a battle. This causing a great smell of powder, the ladies or gentlemen took up the eggshells of perfumed water and threw them at one another. This pleasant disorder being pretty well laughed over, and the two great pies still remaining untouched, some one or other would have the curiosity to see what was in them and on lifting

up the lid of one pie, out would jump the frogs, which would make the ladies skip and scamper; and on lifting up the lid of the other out would fly the birds, which would naturally fly at the light and so put out the candles. And so with the leaping of the frogs below, and the flying of the birds above, would cause a surprising and diverting hurley burley among the guests, in the dark. After which the candles being lighted, the banquet would be brought in, the music sound, and the particulars of each person's surprise and adventures furnish matter for diverting discourse.

The Cook and Confectioner's Dictionary, 1726

The Blessing of the Waters

I WAS anxious to be present at the early liturgy of the morning of Epiphany to witness the ceremony of the blessing of the waters in the pretty quaint village on the island of Skiathos in a far-away corner of Greece. It was a great effort, for the night had been cold and stormy; however, by some process which will never be quite clear to me I managed to find myself at the door of the one church with its many storied bell-tower, soon after four o'clock. Very quaint indeed it looked as I went out of the cold darkness into the brilliantly lighted church, and saw the pious islanders kneeling all around on the cold floor as the liturgy was being chanted prior to the blessing of the waters. Near the entrance stood the font filled to the brim; and close to it was placed an eikon or sacred picture, representing the baptism of our Lord; around the font were stuck many candles fastened by their own grease; whilst

pots and jugs of every size and description, full of water, stood about on the floor in the immediate vicinity of the font.

After the priest had chanted the somewhat tedious litany from the steps of the high altar, he set off dressed sumptuously in his gold brocaded vestments, round the church with a large cross in one hand, and a sprig of basil in the other, accompanied by two acolytes, who waved their censers and cast about a pleasant odor of frankincense. Every one was prostrate as the priest read the appointed Scripture, signed the water in the font and in the adjacent jugs with the cross and threw into the font his sprig of basil. No sooner was this solemn impressive ceremony over than there was a general rush from all sides with mugs and bottles to secure some of this consecrated water. Everybody laughed and hustled his neighbor; even the priest, with the cross in his hand, stood and watched them with a grin. The sudden change from the preceding solemnity was ludicrous in the extreme.

Before taking his departure for his home each person went up to kiss the cross which the priest held and to be sprinkled with water from the sprig of basil. Each person had brought his own sprig of basil which he presented to the priest to bless, and in return for this favor dropped a small coin into the plate held by one of the acolytes. Basil is always held to be a sacred plant in Greece. The legend says that it grew on Christ's tomb, and they imagine that this is the reason why its leaves grow in a cruciform shape. In nearly every humble Greek dwelling you may see a dried sprig of basil hanging in the household sanctuary. It is this sprig which has been blessed at the Feast of Lights. It is most effectual say they in keeping off the influence of the evil eye.

The day broke fine and the violence of the storm was over. Yet our captain still lingered saying that perhaps toward evening we might start, and for this delay I believe I discovered the reason. Towards midday on Epiphany it is customary among these seafaring islanders to hold a solemn function, closely akin to the one I had witnessed in the church that morning, namely, the blessing of the sea.

From their homes by the shore the fishermen came, and all the inhabitants of Skiathos assembled on the quay to join the procession which descended from the church by a zigzag path, headed by two priests and two acolytes behind them waving censers, and men carrying banners and the large cross.

Very touching it was to watch the deep devotion of these hardy seafaring men as they knelt on the shore whilst the litany was being chanted, and whilst the chief priest blest the waves with his cross and invoked the blessing of the most High on the many and varied crafts which were riding at anchor in Skiathos harbor. When the service was over there followed, as in the morning, an unseemly bustle, so ready are these vivacious people to turn from the solemn to the gay. Every one chatted with his neighbor and pressed forward toward a little jetty to see the fun. Presently the priest advanced to the end of this jetty with the cross in his hand, and after tying a heavy stone to it he threw it into the sea. Thereupon there was a general rush into the water; men and boys with their clothes on plunged and dived until at length to the applause of the bystanders one young man succeeded in bringing the cross to the surface, stone and all. A subscription was then raised for the successful diver, the proceeds of which were spent by him in ordering many glasses of wine at the nearest coffee shop,

and the wet men sat down for a heavy drink — to drive out the chill, I suppose.

In many places you will find the boats hauled upon the beach the day before Christmas, and nothing will induce their owners to launch them again until after the blessing of the sea. I am sure the captain of our steamer shared the superstition, though he chose to laugh at the islanders' ways; for a few hours after the sea had been blessed we put out into it, and I imagine could have started hours before if the captain had been so inclined.

J. T. Bent

La Galette du Roi

IN France, where it probably originated, the Twelfth Night cake, known as La Galette du Roi ("the king's cake"), still survives.

The cake is generally made of pastry, and baked in a round sheet like a pie. The size of the cake depends on the number of persons in the company. In former times a broad bean was baked in the cake, but now a small china doll is substituted.

The cake is the last course in the dinner. One of the youngest people at the table is asked to say to whom each piece shall be given. This creates a little excitement and all watch breathlessly to see who gets the doll. The person who gets it is king or queen, and immediately chooses a king or queen for a partner. So soon as the king and queen are announced they are under the constant observation of the rest of the party and whatever they do is immediately commented upon. In a short time there is a perfect uproar: "The king drinks," "the queen speaks," "the



THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI. *Memling.*

queen laughs." This is kept up for a long time; then there are games, music and dancing.

WILLIAM HONE in the *Everyday Book*

Drawing King and Queen on Twelfth Night

HONE, in his *Everyday Book*, describes a drawing as it was conducted in 1823: "First, buy your cake. Then, before your visitors arrive, buy your characters (painted cards), each of which should have a pleasant verse beneath. Next, look at your invitation list and count the number of ladies you expect; and afterwards the number of gentlemen. Then take as many female characters as you have invited ladies; fold them up, exactly of the same size, and number each on the back, taking care to make the King No. 1 and the Queen No. 2. Then prepare and number the gentlemen's characters. Cause tea and coffee to be handed to your visitors as they drop in. When all are assembled, and tea over, put as many ladies' characters in a reticule as there are ladies present; next put the gentlemen's characters in a hat. Then call a gentleman to carry the reticule to the ladies, as they sit, from which each lady is to draw one ticket and preserve it unopened. Select a lady to bear the hat to the gentlemen for the same purpose. There will be one ticket left in the reticule and another in the hat, which the lady and gentleman who carried each is to interchange, as having fallen to each. Next arrange your visitors according to their numbers — the King No. 1, the Queen No. 2, and so on. The king is then to recite the verse on his ticket, then the queen the verse on hers, and so the characters are to proceed in numerical order.

This done, let the cake and refreshments go round, and hey! for merriment.

St. Distaff's Day and Plough Monday

THE day after Epiphany was called St. Distaff's day by country people, because the Christmas holidays being ended the time had come for the resumption of the distaff and other industrious employments of good housewives.

The Monday after Twelfthday was a similar occasion for the resumption of agricultural labors. Another writer connects the day with a custom which among farm servants corresponded somewhat to the 'prentices Boxing Day. The usage was "to draw around a plough and solicit money with guisings, and dancing with swords, preparatory to beginning to plough after the Christmas holidays."

Olaus Magnus describes the "dance with swords": First, with swords sheathed and erect in their hands, they dance in a triple round; then with their drawn swords held erect as before; afterwards extending them from hand to hand, they lay hold of each other's hilts and points, and while they are wheeling more moderately around and changing their order, they throw themselves into the figure of a hexagon which they call a rose: but presently raising and drawing back their swords, they undo that figure, in order to form with them a four-square rose so that they may rebound over the head of each other. Lastly, they dance rapidly backwards, and vehemently rattling the sides of their swords together, conclude their sport. Pipes or songs (sometimes both) direct the measure which at first is slow, increasing to a very quick movement at the close. Olaus Magnus adds: "It is scarcely to be understood how gamely and decent it is."

WILLIAM HONE in *Year Book*

XII

THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT



THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT

"As Little Children in a Darkened Hall"
Christmas Dreams
The Professor's Christmas Sermon
Awaiting the King
Elizabeth's Christmas Sermon
Nichola's "Reason Why"
The Changing Spirit of Christmastide
A Prayer for Christmas Peace
Under the Holly Bough
Christmas Music
A Christmas Sermon


GEORGE VINCENT EDWARDS

AS little children in a darkened hall
At Christmas-tide await the opening door,
Eager to tread the fairy-haunted floor
About the tree with goodly gifts for all,
And into the dark unto each other call —
Trying to guess their happiness before, —
Or of their elders eagerly implore
Hints of what fortune unto them may fall:
So wait we in Time's dim and narrow room,
And with strange fancies, or another's thought,
Try to divine, before the curtain rise,
The wondrous scene. Yet soon shall fly the gloom,
And we shall see what patient ages sought,
The Father's long-planned gift of Paradise.

CHARLES HENRY CRANDALL in *Wayside Music*

Published by G. P. Putnam's Sons

Christmas Dreams

TO-MORROW is Merry Christmas; and when its night descends there will be mirth and music, and the light sounds of the merry-twinkling feet within these now so melancholy walls — and sleep now reigning over all the house save this one room, will be banished far over the sea — and morning will be reluctant to allow her light to break up the innocent orgies.

Were every Christmas of which we have been present at the celebration, painted according to nature — what a Gallery of Pictures! True that a sameness would pervade them all — but only that kind of sameness that pervades the nocturnal heavens. One clear night always is, to common eyes, just like another; for what hath any night to show but one moon and some stars — a blue vault, with here a few braided, and there a few castellated, clouds? yet no two nights ever bore more than a family resemblance to each other before the studious and instructed eye of him who has long communed with Nature, and is familiar with every smile and frown on her changeful, but not capricious, countenance. Even so with the Annual Festivals of the heart. Then our thoughts are the stars that illumine those skies — and on ourselves it depends whether they shall be black as Erebus, or brighter than Aurora.

"Thoughts! that like spirits trackless come and go" — is a fine line of Charles Lloyd's. But no bird skims, no arrow pierces the air, without producing some change in the Universe, which will last to the day of doom. No coming and going is absolutely trackless; nor irrecoverable by Nature's law is any consciousness, however ghostlike; though many a one, even the most blissful, never does

return, but seems to be buried among the dead. But they are not dead — but only sleep; though to us who recall them not, they are as they had never been, and we, wretched ingrates, let them lie for ever in oblivion! How passing sweet when of our own accord they arise to greet us in our solitude! — as a friend who, having sailed away to a foreign land in our youth, has been thought to have died many long years ago, may suddenly stand before us, with face still familiar and name reviving in a moment, and all that he once was to us brought from utter forgetfulness close upon our heart.

My Father's House! How it is ringing like a grove in spring, with the din of creatures happier, a thousand times happier, than all the birds on earth. It is the Christmas holidays — Christmas Day itself — Christmas Night — and Joy in every bosom intensifies Love. Never before were we brothers and sisters so dear to one another — never before had our hearts so yearned towards the authors of our being — our blissful being! There they sat — silent in all that outcry — composed in all that disarray — still in all that tumult; yet, as one or other flying imp sweeps round the chair, a father's hand will playfully strive to catch a prisoner — a mother's gentler touch on some sylph's disordered symar be felt almost as a reproof, and for a moment slacken the fairy flight. One old game treads on the heels of another — twenty within the hour — and many a new game never heard of before nor since, struck out by the collision of kindred spirits in their glee, the transitory fancies of genius inventive through very delight. Then, all at once, there is a hush, profound as ever falls on some little plat within a forest when the moon drops behind the mountain, and small green-robed People

of Peace at once cease their pastime, and vanish. For she — the Silver-Tongued — is about to sing an old ballad, words and air alike hundreds of years old — and sing she doth, while tears begin to fall, with a voice too mournfully beautiful long to breathe below — and, ere another Christmas shall have come with the falling snows, doomed to be mute on earth — but to be hymning in Heaven. . . .

Then came a New Series of Christmases, celebrated, one year in this family, another year in that — none present but those whom Charles Lamb the Delightful calleth the "old familiar faces"; something in all features, and all tones of voice, and all manners, betokening origin from one root — relations all, happy, and with no reason either to be ashamed or proud of their neither high nor humble birth, their lot being cast within that pleasant realm, "the Golden Mean," where the dwellings are connecting links between the hut and the hall — fair edifices resembling manse or mansionhouse, according as the atmosphere expands or contracts their dimensions — in which Competence is next-door neighbor to Wealth, and both of them within the daily walk of Contentment. Merry Christmases they were indeed — one Lady always presiding, with a figure that once had been the stateliest among the stately, but then somewhat bent, without being bowed down, beneath an easy weight of most venerable years. Sweet was her tremulous voice to all her grandchildren's ears. Nor did these solemn eyes, bedimmed into a pathetic beauty, in any degree restrain the glee that sparkled in orbs that have as yet shed not many tears, but tears of joy or pity. Dearly she loved all those mortal creatures whom she was soon about to leave; but she sat in sunshine even within the shadow of death; and the "voice

that called her home" had so long been whispering in her ear, that its accents had become dear to her, and consolatory every word that was heard in the silence, as from another world.

Whether we were indeed all so witty as we thought ourselves — uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces, cousins, and "the rest," it might be presumptuous in us, who were considered by ourselves and a few others not the least amusing of the whole set, at this distance of time to decide — especially in the affirmative; but how the roof did ring with sally, pun, retort, and repartee! Ay, with pun — a species of impertinence for which we have therefore a kindness even to this day. Had incomparable Thomas Hood had the good fortune to have been born a cousin of ours, how with that fine fancy of his would he have shone at those Christmas festivals, eclipsing us all! Our family, through all its different branches, had ever been famous for bad voices, but good ears; and we think we hear ourselves — all those uncles and aunts, nephews and nieces, and cousins — singing now! Easy it is to "warble melody" as to breathe air. But we hope harmony is the most difficult of all things to people in general, for to us it was impossible; and what attempts ours used to be at Seconds! Yet the most woful failures were rapturously encored; and ere the night was done we spoke with most extraordinary voices indeed, every one hoarser than another, till at last, walking home with a fair cousin, there was nothing left it but a tender glance of the eye — a tender pressure of the hand — for cousins are not altogether sisters, and although partaking of that dearest character, possess, it may be, some peculiar and appropriate charms of their own; as didst thou, Emily the "Wildcap!" —

That soubriquet all forgotten now — for now thou art a matron, nay a Grandam, and troubled with an elf fair and frolicsome as thou thyself wert of yore, when the gravest and wisest withstood not the witchery of thy dancing, thy singings, and thy showering smiles.

On rolled Suns and Seasons — the old died — the elderly became old — and the young, one after another, were wafted joyously away on the wings of hope, like birds almost as soon as they can fly, ungratefully forsaking their nests and the groves in whose safe shadow they first essayed their pinions; or like pinnaces that, after having for a few days trimmed their snow-white sails in the land-locked bay, close to whose shores of silvery sand had grown the trees that furnished timber both for hull and mast, slip their tiny cables on some summer day, and gathering every breeze that blows, go dancing over the waves in sunshine, and melt far off into the main. Or, haply, some were like young trees, transplanted during no favorable season, and never to take root in another soil, but soon leaf and branch to wither beneath the tropic sun, and die almost unheeded by those who knew not how beautiful they had been beneath the dews and mists of their own native climate.

Vain images! and therefore chosen by fancy not too plainly to touch the heart. For some hearts grew cold and forbidding with selfish cares — some, warm as ever in their own generous glow, were touched by the chill of Fortune's frowns, ever worst to bear when suddenly succeeding her smiles — some, to rid themselves of painful regrets, took refuge in forgetfulness, and closed their eyes to the past — duty banished some abroad, and duty imprisoned others at home — estrangements there were, at first unconscious and unintended, yet erelong, though causeless, complete —

changes were wrought insensibly, invisibly, even in the innermost nature of those who being friends knew no guile, yet came thereby at last to be friends no more — unrequited love broke some bonds — requited love relaxed others — the death of one altered the conditions of many — and so — year after year — the Christmas Meeting was interrupted — deferred — till finally it ceased with one accord, unrenewed and unrenewable. For when Some Things cease for a time — that time turns out to be forever. . . .

For a good many years we have been tied to town in winter by fetters as fine as frost-work, which we could not break without destroying a whole world of endearment. That seems an obscure image; but it means what the Germans would call in English — our winter environment. We are imprisoned in a net; yet we can see it when we choose — just as a bird can see, when he chooses, the wires of his cage, that are invisible in his happiness, as he keeps hopping and fluttering about all day long, or haply dreaming on his perch with his poll under his plumes — as free in confinement as if let loose into the boundless sky. That seems an obscure image too; but we mean, in truth, the prison unto which we doom ourselves no prison is; and we have improved on that idea, for we have built our own — and are prisoner, turnkey, and jailer all in one, and 'tis noiseless as the house of sleep. Or what if we declare that Christopher North is a king in his palace, with no subjects but his own thoughts — his rule peaceful over those lights and shadows — and undisputed to reign over them his right divine.

The opening year in a town, now answers in all things to our heart's desire. How beautiful the smoky air! The

clouds have a homely look as they hang over the happy families of houses, and seem as if they loved their birthplace; — all unlike those heartless clouds that keep stravaiging over mountain-tops, and have no domicile in the sky! Poets speak of living rocks, but what is their life to that of houses? Who ever saw a rock with eyes — that is, with windows? Stone-blind all, and stone-deaf, and with hearts of stone; whereas who ever saw a house without eyes — that is, windows? Our own is an Argus; yet the good old Conservative grudges not the assessed taxes — his optics are as cheerful as the day that lends them light, and they love to salute the setting sun, as if a hundred beacons, level above level, were kindled along a mountain side. He might safely be pronounced a madman who preferred an avenue of trees to a street. Why, trees have no chimneys; and, were you to kindle a fire in the hollow of an oak, you would soon be as dead as a Druid. It won't do to talk to us of sap, and the circulation of sap. A grove in winter, bole and branch — leaves it has none — is as dry as a volume of sermons. But a street, or a square, is full of "vital sparks of heavenly flame" as a volume of poetry, and the heart's blood circulates through the system like rosy wine.

But a truce to comparisons; for we are beginning to feel contrition for our crime against the country, and, with humbled head and heart, we beseech you to pardon us — ye rocks of Pavey-Ark, the pillared palaces of the storms — ye clouds, now wreathing a diadem for the forehead of Helvellyn — ye trees, that hang the shadows of your undying beauty over the "one perfect chrysolite," of blessed Windermere!

Our meaning is transparent now as the hand of an

apparition waving peace and good-will to all dwellers in the land of dreams. In plainer but not simpler words (for words are like flowers, often rich in their simplicity — witness the Lily, and Solomon's Song) — Christian people all, we wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy New-Year in town or in country — or in ships at sea.

CHRISTOPHER NORTH

The Professor's Christmas Sermon

TAKE all in a word: the truth in God's breast
Lies trace for trace upon ours impressed;
Though he is so bright and we so dim,
We are made in his image to witness him:
And were no eye in us to tell,
Instructed by no inner sense,
The light of heaven from the dark of hell,
That light would want its evidence, —
Though justice, good and truth were still
Divine, if, by some demon's will,
Hatred and wrong had been proclaimed
Law through the worlds, and right misnamed.
No mere exposition of morality
Made or in part or in totality,
Should win you to give it worship, therefore:
And, if no better proof you will care for,
Whom do you count the worst man upon earth?
Be sure, he knows, in his conscience, more
Of right what is, than arrives at birth
In the best man's acts that we bow before:
This last knows better — true, but my fact is,

'Tis one thing to know, and another to practise.
And thence I conclude that the real God-function
Is to furnish a motive and injunction
For practising what we know already.
And such an injunction and such a motive
As the God in Christ, do you waive, and "heady,
High-minded," hang your tablet-votive
Outside the fane on a finger-post?
Morality to the uttermost,
Supreme in Christ as we all confess,
Why need we prove would avail no jot
To make him God, if God he were not?
What is the point where himself lays stress?
Does the precept run "Believe in good,
"In justice, truth now understood
"For the first time?" — or, "Believe in me,
"Who lived and died, yet essentially
"Am Lord of Life?" Whoever can take
The same to his heart and for mere love's sake
Conceive of the love, — that man obtains
A new truth; no conviction gains
Of an old one only, made intense
By a fresh appeal to his faded sense.

ROBERT BROWNING from *Christmas Eve*

Awaiting the King

THAT sweetly prophetic evening silence, before the great feast of Good-Will, does not come over everything each year, even in a lonely cottage on an abandoned farm in Connecticut, than which you cannot possibly imagine anything more silent or more remote from the noise

of the world. Sometimes it rains in torrents just on that night, sometimes it blows a raging gale that twists the leafless birches and elms and hickory trees like dry grass and bends the dark firs and spruces as if they were feathers, and you can hardly be heard unless you shout, for the howling and screaming and whistling of the blast.

But now and then, once in four or five years perhaps, the feathery snow lies a foot deep, fresh-fallen, on the still country side and in the woods; and the waxing moon sheds her large light on all, and Nature holds her breath to wait for the happy day and tries to sleep, but cannot from sheer happiness and peace. Indoors, the fire is glowing on the wide hearth, a great bed of coals that will last all night and be enough, because it is not bitter weather, but only cold and clear and still, as it should be; or if there is only a poor stove, like Overholt's, the iron door is open and a comfortable, cheery red light shines out from within upon the battered iron plate and the wooden floor beyond; and the older people sit round it, not saying much, and thinking with their hearts rather than with their heads, but small boys and girls know that interesting things have been happening in the kitchen all the afternoon, and are rather glad that the supper was not very good, because there will be more room for good things to-morrow; and the grown-ups and the children have made up any little differences of opinion they may have had, before supper time, because Good-Will must reign, and reign alone, like Alexander; so that there is nothing at all to regret, and nothing hurts anybody any more, and they are all happy in just waiting for King Christmas to open the door softly and make them all great people in his kingdom. But if it is the right sort of house, he is already looking in through the window, to

be sure that everyone is all ready for him, and that nothing has been forgotten.

F. Marion Crawford in *The Little City of Hope*

Elizabeth's Christmas Sermon

I CANNOT see that there was anything gross about our Christmas, and we were perfectly merry without any need to pretend, and for at least two days it brought us a little nearer together, and made us kind. Happiness is so wholesome; it invigorates and warms me into piety far more effectually than any amount of trials and griefs, and an unexpected pleasure is the surest means of bringing me to my knees. In spite of the protestations of some peculiarly constructed persons that they are the better for trials, I don't believe it. Such things must sour us, just as happiness must sweeten us, and make us kinder, and more gentle. And will anybody affirm that it behooves us to be more thankful for trials than for blessings? We were meant to be happy, and to accept all the happiness offered with thankfulness — indeed, we are none of us ever thankful enough, and yet we each get so much, so very much, more than we deserve. I know a woman — she stayed with me last summer — who rejoices grimly when those she loves suffer. She believes that it is our lot, and that it braces us and does us good, and she would shield no one from even unnecessary pain; she weeps with the sufferer, but is convinced it is all for the best. Well, let her continue in her dreary beliefs; she has no garden to teach her the beauty and the happiness of holiness, nor does she in the least desire to possess one; her convictions have the sad gray colouring of the dingy

streets and houses she lives amongst — the sad colour of humanity in masses. Submission to what people call their "lot" is simply ignoble. If your lot makes you cry and be wretched, get rid of it and take another; strike out for yourself; don't listen to the shrieks of your relations, to their gibes or their entreaties; don't let your own microscopic set prescribe your goings-out and comings-in; don't be afraid of public opinion in the shape of the neighbour in the next house, when all the world is before you new and shining, and everything is possible, if you only be energetic and independent and seize opportunity by the scruff of the neck.

From *Elizabeth and her German Garden*

Nichola Expounds "the Reason Why" on Christmas Eve

"BUT the whole world helps along," she said shrilly, "or else we should tear each other's eyes out. What do I do, me? I do not put fruit peel in the waste paper to worrit the ragman. I do not put potato jackets in the stove to worrit the ashman. I do not burn the bones because I think of the next poor dog. What crumbs are left I lay always, always on the back fence for the birds. I kill no living thing but spiders — which the devil made. Our Lady knows I do very little. But if I was the men with pockets on I'd find a way! I'd find a way, me," said Nichola, wagging her old gray head.

"Pockets?" Hobart repeated, puzzled.

"For the love of heaven, yes!" Nichola cried. "Pockets — money — give!" she illustrated in pantomime. "What

can I do? On Thursday nights I take what sweets are in this house, what flowers are on all the plants, and I carry them to a hospital I know. If you could see how they wait for me on the beds! What can I do? The good God gave me almost no pockets. It is as he says," she nodded to Pelleas, "*Helping is why.* Yah! None of what you say is so. Mem, I didn't get no time to frost the nutcakes."

ZONA GALE in *The Loves of Pelleas and Etarre*

The Changing Spirit of Christmastide

THE English, from the great prevalence of rural habit throughout every class of society, have always been fond of those festivals and holidays which agreeably interrupt the stillness of country life; and they were, in former days, particularly observant of the religious and social rites of Christmas. It is inspiring to read even the dry details which some antiquarians have given of the quaint humours, the burlesque pageants, the complete abandonment to mirth and good-fellowship, with which this festival was celebrated. It seemed to throw open every door, and unlock every heart. It brought the peasant and the peer together, and blended all ranks in one warm generous flow of joy and kindness. The old halls of castles and manor-houses resounded with the harp and the Christmas carol, and their ample boards groaned under the weight of hospitality. Even the poorest cottage welcomed the festive season with green decorations of bay and holly — the cheerful fire glanced its rays through the lattice, inviting the passenger to raise the latch, and join the gossip knot huddled round the hearth, beguiling the long evening with legendary jokes and oft-told Christmas tales.

One of the least pleasing effects of modern refinement is the havoc it has made among the hearty old holiday customs! It has completely taken off the sharp touchings and spirited reliefs of these embellishments of life, and has worn down society into a more smooth and polished, but certainly a less characteristic surface. Many of the games and ceremonials of Christmas have entirely disappeared, and like the sherris sack of old Falstaff, are become matters of speculation and dispute among commentators. They flourished in times full of spirit and lustihood, when men enjoyed life roughly, but heartily and vigorously; times wild and picturesque, which have furnished poetry with its richest materials, and the drama with its most attractive variety of characters and manners. The world has become more worldly. There is more of dissipation, and less of enjoyment. Pleasure has expanded into a broader, but shallower stream, and has forsaken many of those deep and quiet channels where it flowed sweetly through the calm bosom of domestic life. Society has acquired a more enlightened and elegant tone; but it has lost many of its strong local peculiarities, its home-bred feelings, its honest fireside delights. The traditionary customs of golden-hearted antiquity, its feudal hospitalities, and lordly wassailings, have passed away with the baronial castles and stately manor-houses in which they were celebrated. They comported with the shadowy hall, the great oaken gallery, and the tapestried parlour, but are unfitted to the light showy saloons and gay drawing-rooms of the modern villa.

Shorn, however, as it is, of its ancient and festive honours, Christmas is still a period of delightful excitement in England. It is gratifying to see that home feeling com pletely aroused which seems to hold so powerful a place in

every English bosom. The preparations making on every side for the social board that is again to unite friends and kindred; the presents of good cheer passing and repassing, those tokens of regard, and quickeners of kind feelings; the evergreens distributed about houses and churches, emblems of peace and gladness; all these have the most pleasing effect in producing fond associations, and kindling benevolent sympathies. Even the sound of the waits, rude as may be their minstrelsy, breaks upon the mid-watches of a winter night with the effect of perfect harmony. As I have been awakened by them in that still and solemn hour, "when deep sleep falleth upon man," I have listened with a hushed delight, and, connecting them with the sacred and joyous occasion, have almost fancied them into another celestial choir, announcing peace and good-will to mankind.

WASHINGTON IRVING

Charles Kingsley's Prayer for Christmas Peace

CHRISTMAS peace is God's; and he must give it himself, with his own hand, or we shall never get it. Go then to God himself. Thou art his child, as Christmas Day declares; be not afraid to go unto thy Father. Pray to him; tell him what thou wantest: say, "Father, I am not moderate, reasonable, forbearing. I fear I cannot keep Christmas aright for I have not a peaceful Christmas spirit in me; and I know that I shall never get it by thinking, and reading, and understanding; for it passes all that, and lies far away beyond it, does peace, in the very essence of thine undivided, unmoved, absolute, eternal Godhead, which no change nor decay of this created world, nor sin

or folly of men or devils, can ever alter; but which abideth forever what it is, in perfect rest, and perfect power and perfect love. O Father, give me thy Christmas peace."

From *Town and Country Sermons*

Under the Holly Bough

YE who have scorned each other,
Or injured friend or brother,
In this fast fading year;
Ye who, by word or deed,
Have made a kind heart bleed,
Come gather here.

Let sinned against, and sinning,
Forget their strife's beginning,
And join in friendship now:
Be links no longer broken,
Be sweet forgiveness spoken,
Under the Holly Bough.

Ye who have loved each other,
Sister and friend and brother,
In this fast fading year:
Mother and sire and child,
Young man and maiden mild,
Come gather here;

And let your hearts grow fonder,
As memory shall ponder
Each past unbroken vow.
Old loves and younger wooing

Are sweet in the renewing,
 Under the Holly Bough.

Ye who have nourished sadness,
Estranged from hope and gladness,
 In this fast fading year;
Ye, with o'erburdened mind,
Made aliens from your kind,
 Come gather here.

Let not the useless sorrow
Pursue you night and morrow.
 If e'er you hoped, hope now —
Take heart; — uncloud your faces,
And join in our embraces,
 Under the Holly Bough.

CHARLES MACKAY

Christmas Music

MANY elements mix in the Christmas of the present, partly, no doubt, under the form of vague and obscure sentiment, partly as time-honoured reminiscences, partly as a portion of our own life. But there is one phase of poetry which we enjoy more fully than any previous age. That is music. Music is of all the arts the youngest, and of all can free herself most readily from symbols. A fine piece of music moves before us like a living passion, which needs no form or color, no interpreting associations, to convey its strong but indistinct significance. Each man there finds his soul revealed to him, and enabled to assume a cast of feeling in obedience to the changeful sound. In

this manner all our Christmas thoughts and emotions have been gathered up for us by Handel in his drama of the *Messiah*. To Englishmen it is almost as well known and necessary as the Bible. But only one who has heard its pastoral episode performed year after year from childhood in the hushed cathedral, where pendent lamps or sconces make the gloom of aisle and choir and airy column half intelligible, can invest this music with long associations of accumulated awe. To his mind it brings a scene at midnight of hills clear in the starlight of the East, with white flocks scattered on the down. The breath of winds that come and go, the bleating of the sheep, with now and then a tinkling bell, and now and then the voice of an awakened shepherd, is all that breaks the deep repose. Overhead shimmer the bright stars, and low to west lies the moon, not pale and sickly (he dreams) as in our North, but golden, full, and bathing distant towers and tall aerial palms with floods of light. Such is a child's vision, begotten by the music of the symphony; and when he wakes from trance at its low silver close, the dark cathedral seems glowing with a thousand angel faces, and all the air is tremulous with angel wings. Then follow the solitary treble voice and the swift chorus.

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

A Christmas Sermon

TO be honest, to be kind — to earn a little and to spend a little less, to make upon the whole a family happier for his presence, to renounce when that shall be necessary and not be embittered, to keep a few friends but those with-

out capitulation — above all, on the same grim condition, to keep friends with himself — here is a task for all that a man has of fortitude and delicacy. He has an ambitious soul who would ask more; he has a hopeful spirit who should look in such an enterprise to be successful.

There is indeed one element in human destiny that not blindness itself can controvert: whatever else we are intended to do, we are not intended to succeed; failure is the fate allotted. It is so in every art and study; it is so above all in the continent art of living well. Here is a pleasant thought for the year's end or for the end of life: Only self-deception will be satisfied, and there need be no despair for the despairer.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON in *A Christmas Sermon*

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